United Nations S/PV.8265

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8265th meeting
Wednesday, 23 May 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Melki
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Koishybayev
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Miller

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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18-15695 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Mladenov is joining us via video tele-conference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: On 15 May, I briefed the Council on the deadly protests that took place in Gaza the day before (see S/PV.8256). At least 60 people were killed and the number continues to climb. It was a tragic day in the long history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, another reminder of the need to bring peace to this troubled land. It was also a reminder of how easily violence in Gaza flares up. It was a reminder that Gaza is on the verge of collapse, that its people — who have lived for more than a decade under the control of Hamas, with crippling Israeli closures and with diminishing hopes for an end to the occupation and a political solution, and who have survived three devastating conflicts — are increasingly desperate. We must act urgently to avoid another war, to alleviate the suffering of people and to empower the Palestinian Government to take up its responsibilities in Gaza.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the past month 76 Palestinians, including 11 children, have been killed by Israel Defence Forces and over 3,000 injured by live fire and other means. This period has seen by far the worst levels of violence since 2014. There have been no Israeli fatalities. Following the 14 May violence, the Foreign Ministers of the League of Arab States held an emergency meeting in Cairo and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation held an emergency summit in Istanbul. I also take note of the adoption of the resolution of the Human Rights Council on 18 May, which calls for the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the events in Gaza.

Let me reiterate what I said last week in this Chamber by calling on all to join me in condemning in the strongest possible terms the actions that have led to the loss of so many lives in Gaza. Israel has the responsibility to calibrate its use of force, to not use lethal force except as a last resort under imminent threat of death or serious injury. It must protect its citizens, but it must do so proportionally and investigate every incident that has led to a loss of human life.

Hamas, which controls Gaza, must not use the protests as cover to attempt to place bombs at the fence or create provocations; its operatives must not hide among the demonstrators and risk the lives of civilians. Palestinians have a right to protest peacefully. As demonstrations are likely to continue into the month of June, I again reiterate our call for all sides to exercise maximum restraint.

Council members have often spoken here in the Chamber of the need to prevent war; and the Secretary-General has put preventive diplomacy at the heart of his agenda. It is time for our words to be tested in Gaza. I have taken note of the request last week by several members of the Security Council to bring forward proposals to address the situation in Gaza, in line with our commitment to advance urgent infrastructure and economic development projects, improve access and movement, and support the Egyptian-led reconciliation process.

Gaza's infrastructure teeters on the verge of total collapse, particularly its electricity and water networks, as well as its health system. In the past, the implementation of key infrastructure projects faced significant delays and obstacles. Failure to implement immediately, over the next 6 to 12 months, a set of modest, achievable projects — already endorsed by relevant stakeholders and some already funded — will create an amplified humanitarian crisis with fewer means to address it effectively.

We have all the instruments in place to address this challenge. We just need to organize ourselves better. As such, I plan to take the following actions: first, to prioritize projects identified and agreed over the past two years by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC); secondly, to adopt a task force modality with an enhanced United Nations project-management capacity to speed up implementation of the projects on the

ground in Gaza; and, thirdly, to strengthen our close coordination with the Palestinian Authority, Israel and Egypt to overcome any political, administrative and logistical blockages that may emerge.

Let me be very clear: the condition for success is that the ceasefire achieved in 2014 be observed by all factions in Gaza and that all factions refrain from illicit arms build-up and militant activity on the ground.

If we are able to move quickly, we will reduce the chances of military confrontation and another devastating conflict. We will create the conditions for relaxing movement and access restrictions and preserve the fraying links between Gaza and the West Bank. We will also support Egyptian reconciliation efforts, and, most importantly perhaps, we will provide much needed breathing space for ordinary Gazans.

Ultimately, these efforts are meant to strengthen — not replace — overarching political objectives: the unification of Gaza and the West Bank under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian Authority in line with the Quartet principles, and an end to the occupation and a resolution of the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We are currently discussing with key stakeholders how to move forward on this strategy. I am encouraged by the positive engagement by all. I particularly welcome Egyptian President Al Sisi's decision to maintain the opening of Rafah crossing throughout the holy month of Ramadan. That is an important step, and I hope that the security situation will allow for more regular movement through the crossing.

I also want to acknowledge Israel's efforts to ensure the delivery of goods to Gaza, despite the serious damage done to the Kerem Shalom crossing by protesters during recent weeks. I look forward to further measures that will enable an increase in the entry of goods and stimulate economic activity.

I also welcome the decision by the Palestinian Government to provide critical medical supplies and doctors to Gaza after the tragic events of 14 May, as well as their engagement with the United Nations on facilitating much needed deliveries to Gaza.

The AHLC has identified several critical projects aimed at ensuring a long-term future for Gaza, and I am encouraged by ongoing work with our partners to prioritize a short list of key projects based on the conclusions of our recent meetings in Cairo, Washington, D.C., and Brussels.

We are engaged constructively with Israel, the Palestinian Government and Egypt to discuss how to improve coordination and move forward.

I also urge the international community to generously support those goals, both financially and politically. Progress is dependant on the coordinated action and sustained commitment of all stakeholders.

Taking a step back from the immediate situation in Gaza, the confluence of conflicts in the Middle East is raising tensions on multiple fronts — in Syria, in Yemen and, clearly, on the Israeli-Palestinian track. Amid the political stagnation, frustration and disillusionment in the Palestinian diaspora is also mounting. People are watching events there very closely. Confined to often squalid refugee camps, devastated by war, most notably and tragically in the Yarmouk camp in Syria, and with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East experiencing a severe funding crisis, Palestinian refugees are increasingly facing an untenable situation, risking an expanded humanitarian crisis and further instability.

Developments in Jerusalem and in Gaza reverberated with some protests across Lebanon, mostly in refugee camps. Thankfully, no violent incidents were reported.

In a important development on 30 April, the Palestinian National Council convened in Ramallah for the first time in 22 years, where President Abbas was re-elected as its Chairman. While reiterating the commitment to a peaceful solution based on long-standing parameters and United Nations resolutions, inter alia, the final statement urged the suspension of the recognition of Israel, security coordination and the Paris Protocol. It also outlined international moves that the Palestinians are planning to take to advance the goal of an independent Palestinian State and to seek protection for the Palestinian people.

Regrettably, the announcement that the salaries of Palestinian Authority employees in Gaza will be paid has not been implemented, which further contributes to the explosive situation in the Strip.

On 15 May, Palestine acceded to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Convention on the Prohibition, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons.

Meanwhile, in other developments I must note that no settlement plans were approved and no tenders were issued in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, during the reporting period. Settlement construction in Area C in East Jerusalem, however, has continued, and the Israeli Government has approved major plans focused on solidifying its control of East Jerusalem. Israeli authorities have also demolished or seized some 30 Palestinian-owned structures across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. As a result, 43 Palestinians have been displaced and the livelihoods of more than 140 have been affected. On 2 May, Israel demolished or seized some 14 structures in the Masafer Yatta area of xouth Hebron, located in an Israeli-declared military firing zone. At least nine households have been impacted, with some 35 people displaced.

I am also concerned by developments regarding Khan Al-Ahmar/Abu Al-Helu, a vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin community east of Jerusalem, home to some 180 people — over half of whom are children — who also faced an increased risk of demolition and relocation.

In separate security incidents, Israeli Defence Forces targeted Hamas facilities in Gaza on at least 10 occasions, with no injuries having been reported.

During the reporting period, the Israeli Defence Forces also destroyed two tunnels it attributed to Hamas, bringing the total number of tunnels destroyed since October to 10. Amid Israeli reports of violence directed at Israeli forces, on 16 May Palestinian militants reportedly fired machine-gun rounds towards Israeli troops, hitting several houses in the Israeli town of Sderot, which caused damage but no injuries.

I also note the move of the Embassies of the United States of America, Guatemala and Paraguay from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. I reiterate the position of the United Nations that Jerusalem is a final-status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties based on relevant resolutions. Given the importance to Jews, Christians and Muslims, Jerusalem is a highly sensitive and charged issue for millions of believers around the world. Therefore, upholding the status quo at the holy sites remains critical for peace and stability.

The Secretary-General voiced his utmost concern following reports of heightened tensions, missile launches from Syria targeting Israeli positions, and retaliatory strikes by the Israeli Defence Forces. In the context of the 10 May events, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) personnel have observed a high level of kinetic activity in the areas of separation and limitation and across the ceasefire line. Some of that activity impacted locations in the northern and central parts of the area of separation. Throughout those events, UNDOF maintained liaison with both sides to ensure that the parties respected the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words on the challenges and opportunities ahead. We need a unified approach to change the current reality on the ground in Gaza. While the international community has a central role to play, leaders on all sides of the conflict must show the political will and determination to achieve genuine progress. Every day that the intra-Palestinian political paralysis continues and every day that the closures persist, more lives are put at risk in Gaza. Turning the Gaza tap on and off is not a sustainable strategy for anyone. We must break the cycle or risk more lethal consequences. Gaza is an integral part of the larger puzzle. Ultimately, the success of any initiative in Gaza is linked to a credible political horizon that unites all Palestinians.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where settlement construction continues and the situation remains fragile. Nor can we lose sight of the broader political picture and the need to bring the sides back tc the negotiating table. In that regard, as discussed on my recent visits to the Russian Federation and Jordan, the Middle East Quartet remains a key forum to discuss perspectives for resolving the conflict, including within the broader regional context. We must continue to work together to end the occupation and bring abou ta just, lasting and comprehensive resolution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of two-States and in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and prior agreements. There is no alternative to achieving a peaceful future for all the people of this troubled land.

The President: I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements

Mr. Koishybayev (Kazakhstan): We thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Mladenov, for his detailed and objective update on the situation in the Middle East. We are closely following his efforts and negotiations held with the key countries on this issue. We appreciate the positive outcome of

his meeting in Moscow with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov.

We echo the warnings of the United Nations that there is a cycle of conflagration of conflicts currently in the Middle East. There are rising tensions at all levels and in various contexts, including the situations in Syria and in Yemen, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We are particularly concerned about the move of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem on 14 May, and the clashes in Gaza, which resulted in casualties among Palestinians.

Kazakhstan's position on the Middle East peace process is clear and remains unchanged. We support the two-State solution and call for the early resumption of negotiations, especially in the bilateral format and without preconditions. That should be done in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant Security Council resolutions, and other mechanisms and initiatives, such as the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Madrid principles and the land-in-exchange-for-peace formula.

We support the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the creation of a free, sovereign and independent State within the international borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital. Jerusalem is the common homeland of different ethnicities and religions. Palestine and Israel must respect each other's right to existence and avoid taking actions that might further escalate the situation. We look forward to implementation of the provisions of resolution 2334 (2016), and we would like to stress that the construction of new Israeli settlements is causing hardships for the Palestinians, who are incurring huge economic losses.

Turning to Gaza, we are alarmed by the situation there. We support the Egyptian and the international efforts to ease the situation in that sector. With regard to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Kazakhstan reiterates the need to support this important mechanism. We will therefore make another voluntary financial contribution to the organization this year.

My country underscores the importance of achieving intra-Palestinian unity. Investments in building strong Palestinian institutions and promoting reforms in the security sector — the military, law enforcement and judicial and correctional systems — will, together with new legislation, ensure the rule of law and good governance. Our colleagues from United Nations humanitarian agencies informed us that the Central Emergency Response Fund had recently allocated $1.26 million for Gaza. Those funds are meant to strengthen and reinforce the rapid procurement of essential medical supplies and their distribution to critical hospitals providing trauma care — all of which is critical to relieving the suffering of the population.

The immediate start of direct negotiations and, as a result, the speedy implementation of agreements, in the first place, will allow us to solve the confidence-deficit problem and enable us to move to a more open dialogue between the two sides. It is necessary to identify mutually acceptable principles for the advancement of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

Lastly, we once again reiterate our call to ensure Israel's right to security as well as Palestine's right to statehood, using appropriate instruments of preventive diplomacy, including political, economic and environmental confidence-building measures, as well as addressing new challenges and threats. We are ready to work towards finding common ground and look forward to effectively cooperating with a view to bringing peace and security both to Palestinians and Israelis.

The President: There are no more names on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8266

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8266th meeting
Wednesday, 23 May 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Al-Jarallah
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/432)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2018/432)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel; Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2018/432, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita: It is my pleasure to address the Security Council today and provide it with an update on the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), relevant international support, including by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and challenges encountered thus far, as well as possible measures for further consideration in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2391 (2017).

I do not need to remind the Council that the security situation in the Sahel is dire. Just yesterday, we once again received reports of a shooting in Ouagadougou. Over the past weeks and months, local security forces in the Liptako-Gourma triangle, as well as international forces and MINUSMA, continued to face devastating terrorist attacks, including on 18 April in Timbuktu. However, let us not forget those who suffer the most: local populations and civilians, who continue to be intimidated and harassed, live in fear for their lives on a daily basis, cannot send their children to school and/or are unable to meet their most basic needs, including access to food and nutrition. Terrorism and transnational organized crime continue to be two of most pressing security challenges facing the Sahel region, and I fear that we will have to grapple with them for many years to come.

Against that backdrop, I can only express admiration for the member States of the G-5 Sahel, which have taken their fate into their own hands, and commend them for the efforts that they have undertaken over the past year to operationalize the Joint Force. As reported by the Secretary-General (S/2018/432), since the authorization of its deployment by the African Union Peace and Security Council this past April and the subsequent renewal of its mandate only a month ago, notable progress has been made. Member States of the G-5 for the Sahel have begun deploying their troops and equipping the command posts and sector headquarters in all three sectors. Burkina Faso and the Niger have each deployed one battalion on their respective borders with Mali, while the deployment of the Malian battalion in the Litpako-Gourma triangle is under way.

The Joint Force conducted its first two operations in the Central Sector and undertook important first steps towards establishing its human rights compliance framework, including defining screening and monitoring mechanisms to address human rights violations. Nonetheless, much work remains ahead of us. The operationalization of the Joint Force has incurred delays and has yet to attain full operational capability. I call on G-5 Sahel member States to relentlessly follow up on the efforts made to date and deploy remaining troops as quickly as possible so that the Joint Force can resume its operations. I also call on the G-5 Sahel to further clarify the Joint Force's concept of operations and come together to jointly define its end state and objectives. I also acknowledge that the Joint Force continues to urgently require equipment and training, including air and communication assets. Those capability gaps are another important factor delaying the full operationalization of the Joint Force, and the support of the international community will be required to overcome them.

While not underestimating the complexity of military operations, we also believe it is important to address the recent reports about allegations of human rights violations by security forces in the region as a matter of priority, as those may constitute obstacles for the provision of United Nations support. In particular,

I urge the member States of the G-5 Sahel to take advantage of the efforts carried out by the Joint Force, MINUSMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework and cooperate for its rapid and effective implementation, including by supporting effective accountability mechanisms, ensuring the systematic deployment and presence of provost officers at the company level, and supporting the deployment of United Nations teams in countries of the G-5 Sahel.

I also express my profound gratitude to the international community for its sustained and continual support to this important initiative. The outcomes of the international high-level conference on the Sahel held on 23 February in Brussels are a testament to that. An additional €80 million was raised at the conference, bringing the total amount of pledges in support of the Joint Force for the first year to over €400 million, which is almost the entirety of its projected budget for the first year of operations. The member States of the G-5 for the Sahel, the European Union and the United Nations also signed the technical arrangement defining the scope and modalities for providing MINUSMA support to the Joint Force, as requested by resolution 2391 (2017), on which we briefed the Council on 13 April.

I applaud the European Union for managing the coordination hub, which is no small task. The hub is an important tool for coordinating and mobilizing member States' and partners' contributions. I also thank the European Union for its own generous and important contributions to MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force. However, I am also concerned that, while the support mobilized by the international community to date is indeed commendable, the support mechanisms, such as they have been set up by resolution 2391 (2017), will require perpetual resource-generation efforts to fund support to the Joint Force, including replenishing the African Peace Facility. In the medium to long term, it will be challenging to sustain the momentum achieved so far. What is more, the United Nations will continue to depend on others to be able to implement the support measures it has been mandated to provide to the G-5 for the Sahel Joint Force by resolution 2391 (2017).

(*spoke in French*)

To date, despite the significant number of pledges received, the funds necessary to fully implement MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force has still not been received. With the funds we have received so far, the Mission can provide only essential consumable goods and casualty evacuation. MINUSMA is still in urgent need of funds to provide engineering support to allow it to be able to assist in strengthening the G-5 for the Sahel camps in Mali. The lack of secure operational bases in Mali has proven to be a major obstacle to the full operationalization of the Joint Force. The troops who have already been deployed must live and conduct their operations under the most difficult conditions. However, MINUSMA's own experience in Mali demonstrates the need for effective camp-protection measures. In that regard, I call on all donors to make a contribution or to earmark additional funds for MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force. As the Council knows, MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force is limited to Mali itself, which is part of the Central Sector of the Joint Force's operations. Therefore, I also call on donors to step up their support to Sector East and Sector West, which so far have not received support from the United Nations. Finally, few of the pledges have been disbursed to date. I call on donors to disburse them as soon as possible.

Over the long term — and here I echo the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his most recent report — our overall goal must be to consider together which mechanisms will allow for more predictable funding, including through mandatory contributions, as well as support measures and more predictable and sustainable financing, for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. That would provide better support for MINUSMA and ensure that it can effectively fulfil its own mandate.

Ultimately, any attempt to overcome instability and insecurity in the Sahel will succeed only if it focuses on the link between development, peace and security. The interventions of the Joint Force will remain a security-focused initiative, but must be embedded within a broader and holistic framework, combined with initiatives to improve governance, access to nutrition and basic social services, and creating opportunities for young people. They must also always maintain the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali as their primary objective, as that is the cornerstone of all stabilization efforts in the region.

I welcome the progress made in the establishment of the Joint Force compliance framework, but I remain concerned about reports of human rights violations committed by local law-and-order forces. The Joint

Force will succeed only if it enjoys the trust and support of the local population.

I also welcome the efforts undertaken by the G-5 for the Sahel to strengthen its Permanent Secretariat and its links with the Joint Force command in Sevaré. An important next step, which I urge the G-5 for the Sahel to pursue, is the strengthening of its ownership of efforts to operationalize the Joint Force, as well as efforts to mobilize resources and to therefore establish the support group. The establishment of such an important structure would allow for more concerted and systematic cooperation with the region, the African Union and other international partners, and would ensure that the Joint Force's operations were aligned with a broader strategy for the region as a whole.

The commitment of the United Nations to that important initiative remains unwavering. It is up to all of us to ensure that the Joint Force succeeds.

The President: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Security Council for organizing this meeting on the situation in the Sahel, a region of the world that is facing a thorny and complex crisis. This demonstrates the Council's interest in our subregion, despite the many other sources of concern for international peace and security.

On behalf of the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, whose pertinent and strategic report on the establishment of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel (S/2018/432) perfectly summarizes the reality of the current issues in that region of Africa and proposes several pragmatic ways to make the international community's response to the multifaceted crisis more effective.

Faced with multiple challenges, which are often minimized or ignored, the Sahel region has gradually become a major area of instability in Africa and is today a growing threat to international security. Five countries at the heart of the Sahelian space — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — decided to join forces as an organization and form a core group to face with solidarity the immense shared challenges that threaten the stability of already fragile States and hinder socioeconomic development. Foremost among those challenges is the security crisis, which has for several years, but with extreme urgency recently, been characterized by the proliferation of armed conflicts in our countries, the spread of extremist religious terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of cross-border crime with international ramifications, the migratory crisis and its most hideous manifestation, namely, the abject trafficking in human beings, organized by illegal immigration channels towards Europe.

On the strictly military level, the mobilization of our five countries and the support of the international community have enabled the taking of a very positive first step forward. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, over recent months, we have been in the process of successfully establishing the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which is composed of 5,000 soldiers and which enjoys the support of the international community, in particular through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane, led by France. A so-called technical arrangement was concluded in that regard among the United Nations, the European Union and the Group of Five for the Sahel last February, and was signed by the President of the Niger and current President of the G-5 Sahel, His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou. Moreover, in order to comply with United Nations standards in this area, the Joint Force has integrated into its strategic concept of operations the human rights compliance framework advocated by the United Nations. This United Nations support following resolution 2391 (2017) is therefore to be welcomed. It has already enabled us to collaborate during the setting up of the Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré, Mali, and during the conduct of the first two operations of the Force, namely, Operation Hawbi and Operation Pagnali, in the sensitive border area between Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger.

In line with the Secretary-General's statements, we must acknowledge that we are still far from reaching a good cruising speed in the concrete implementation of our security response to the crisis that threatens to totally destabilize the Sahel and its surroundings. Although more than 80 per cent of our troops are already deployed at headquarters in Sévaré and in the three operational areas, the fact remains that the troops are still generally poorly equipped, and the military bases and, more generally, the logistics necessary for an effective intervention are lacking, especially in an environment that is often hostile in several respects. In the same vein, the configuration of MINUSMA support

for the Joint Force currently authorized by resolution 2391 (2017) severely limits effective regional coverage and operational control on all fronts identified as urgent for future interventions by the Force to fight terrorist groups and other criminal organizations determined to spread terror in the Sahelian space.

We therefore confirm the diagnosis established by the Secretary-General in his report, which highlights in particular the inadequacy of the mechanism put in place to support the Joint Force. It is "neither sustainable nor commensurate with the challenges we face in the Sahel" (*S/2018/432, para. 74*). Against that backdrop, it would undeniably be a matter for the Security Council to place the United Nations contribution at a more appropriate level, which will include compulsory contributions as the best option in order to be able to provide long-term support. This is an opportunity to reiterate our call to the Council to provide the Joint Force with the strengthened mandate it deserves and the resources necessary to complete its operationalization and ensure its full and efficient response capability. Such an evolution of the Joint Force's mandate would be precisely in line with the recommendations resulting from the consultations conducted last March by the Security Council in the context of improving peacekeeping operations with a view to making them more flexible, more dynamic and more adapted to the different theatres of operations — in short, more effective in a constantly changing world. This is therefore also a good opportunity to take advantage of this more pragmatic and dynamic approach to United Nations interventions.

More specifically, with respect to the solutions for supporting the Joint Force suggested by the Secretary-General and better adapted to the context, as Council members know, before taking up my duties last February at the helm of the G-5 Sahel, I had the honour of leading two important international missions, one under the auspices of the African Union — the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) — and the other under the auspices of the United Nations — the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). In both cases, the good collaboration between African forces and the United Nations led to positive results, particularly in Somalia, through the substantial logistical support provided by the United Nations to AMISOM and, in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the establishment within MONUSCO of a rapid Force Intervention Brigade, which is made up exclusively of troops from the countries of the subregion and has been responsible for the most significant successful military interventions by the United Nations in that country since the establishment of a United Nations mission there nearly 20 years ago. I am therefore speaking from experience, having recently had an opportunity to experience the various realities of intervention missions on a daily basis, but always in a context framed by a Security Council resolution.

It is therefore a question of succeeding, on the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, in setting up an effective operational force with an African backbone but strongly supported by the entire international community, led by the United Nations, in order to send a clear and strong message to all the negative forces and thereby carry out one of the most dangerous missions, whose failure would mean the total destabilization of a good part of the African continent, a region, we should recall, that is a neighbour to the Mediterranean, and therefore the European continent. It is also an important crossroads of traffic towards the rest of the world — America, Asia and the Middle East, in particular. For the nebulous international terrorist network and all related groups, the failure of our intervention would mean offering them on a silver platter the best possible operational basis to organize the almost unlimited spread throughout the world of an even more terrifying mass terrorism than we are already unfortunately experiencing today.

Aware that they are the first to be affected, our States, despite their very limited financial resources, recently undertook major efforts to increase the capabilities of our defence forces and security sectors, which now benefit, on average, from more than 20 per cent of our five countries' budgets, often to the detriment of social sectors, despite their critical nature, which constitutes a particularly painful trade-off for our Governments. The expected share of the five countries to the financing the Joint Force is therefore paid by all, sometimes with some delays. In addition, the trust fund established to manage the financial effort of the international community in support of the Joint Force already has an account with the Central Bank of Mauritania, the headquarters country of the G-5 Sahel.

Following the meeting of our organization's Defence Ministers two weeks ago in Ouagadougou, instructions were given to urgently appoint the members of the Trust Fund Support Committee, including its guarantor, the European Union, with a view to accelerating

its operations. It should also be noted with gratitude that the first financial contributions, mainly African, to date, have already arrived or are in the process of arriving, particularly from Rwanda and the member countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Also, all the mobilization for the Sahel currently taking place must materialize very quickly in a tangible way on the ground so as to restore hope and confidence to our populations, their support being essential to the success in the long term of the multidimensional intervention of the international community that has come to the aid of our region.

It is with this in mind that we are also involved in the in-depth work that is beginning to be carried out, particularly with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a view to ensuring strict respect for human rights in this fight against terrorism. The promotion of citizens' rights and freedoms should be considered an asset and not a constraint, because it greatly contributes to discrediting the discourse of the backward forces we are fighting.

It is crucial for our success to be long term and not ephemeral, and for the security response not be isolated from the rest of the complex Sahel problem. Without peace and security there can be no development or prosperity. The clear lack of development and socioeconomic progress favours the increase in insecurity and instability. We are therefore faced with a vicious circle that requires a more global solution and a more holistic approach in our response to the Sahelian situation. The security-development nexus must therefore be at the heart of our effort. It should be very tangible on the ground for the people of the Sahel. From here, from the Chamber, the necessary momentum will emerge to transform the commitments made by all into concrete actions in order to rapidly achieve the crucial goal of pacification and of securing the Sahel region in parallel with the implementation of an ambitious socioeconomic development plan that meets the expectations of our populations, in particular young people and women. To that end, the United Nations developed the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel together with the African Union, which we commend. At the specific level of the G-5 Sahel, we have in place a development and security strategy that includes an operational plan — the Priority Investment Programme — for whose implementation we count on the contribution of the entire international community. I note with satisfaction that a number of friends and partners of the Sahel, many of whom are represented in the Chamber, have already indicated their intention to support the Priority Investment Programme.

We can clearly see that the deliberations to find the proper solutions to adequately deal with the immense challenges of the Sahel region have taken place and that multifaceted solutions, as well as some of the necessary resources, have been identified. It remains only to take strong action to realize all those good intentions in an appropriate framework and to thereby meet the expectations of the people of the Sahel, including young people without hope for the future who are reluctant to join the ranks of the retrograde terrorist groups or to attempt the suicidal venture of clandestine migration, and women living in the desert areas of the Sahel who face drought and see their newborns die in their arms owing to the prevailing insecurity that has caused the medical staff to flee the area and, more generally, the population's lack of basic services.

It is high time to act for the Sahel beyond speeches and half-measures. The time for resolute action must begin here in the Chamber under the momentum of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Sidikou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Ms. Mohammed: At the outset allow me to commend your delegation, Madam President, for convening this timely meeting and for giving me the opportunity to share with the Security Council the perspectives of the African Union (AU) on the important and urgent matter concerning the situation in the Sahel region and the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five States for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

The African Union remains deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in Mali and of the greater Sahel region as a result of the increasing threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism and its spread to the surrounding countries. The events in that region again remind us of the fact that terrorist groups know no borders. They think and act globally. The international approach in dealing with that scourge must therefore be coherent, comprehensive and integrated. Sustainable and simultaneous engagement is needed in all affected areas and regions.

There is therefore an urgent need for robust international engagement in support of the efforts of the countries of the region. The African Union has been very supportive of the various regional initiatives, in particular the G-5 Sahel and the Nouakchott process, which demonstrate the political will and the commitment of the countries concerned to combating the serious threat of terrorism and transnational crime.

Such initiatives deserve international support that is commensurate with the threat confronting the region. We should be fully aware that the efforts being deployed by the region will prevail only if they continue to benefit from strong international consensus and robust support. The African Union will spare no effort towards that objective and will continue to sensitize its member States and the international community with regard to the urgent need to enhance its support.

(*spoke in French*)

The African Union commends the progress made to date by the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, which has successfully led its first two operations since the establishment of its headquarters in Sévaré, Mali. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the leaders of the States members of the G-5 Sahel, namely, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad, for their renewed resolve to work together for the peace, security and stability of the region.

I would also like to express the gratitude of the African Union to the bilateral and multilateral partners for their multifaceted assistance, including those that pledged at the high-level conference held in Brussels on 23 February. We also welcome the first African financial contributions, in particular those of Rwanda and States members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

In that regard, while reiterating our call for the rapid disbursement of the pledged funds, I wish once again to underscore the urgent need to ensure the predictable and sustainable funding of the Joint Force, for, as the Security Council already knows, owing to financial difficulties and the lack of major equipment, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has fallen behind in achieving its operational capacity. To that is added the fact that the Joint Force cannot lead large-scale operations, ultimately leaving the way open for terrorist groups and organized crime, in particular the trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings, which is wreaking havoc in the region.

The needs in terms of logistical support and intelligence gathering are also vast and require huge contributions. That is why it seems prudent to us to once again request the support of the Security Council for the G-5 Sahel and to draw attention to the volatile security situation in the Liptako-Gourma region, where the civilian population, symbols of the State and the international forces are increasingly becoming prime targets. In that context, only a robust mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as significant resouces made available to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, would help to eliminate the identified threats.

(*spoke in English*)

Before concluding, I would like to report that, at its seven hundredth and fifty-ninth meeting, held in Addis-Ababa on 23 March, the African Union Peace and Security Council decided to extend the deployment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for an additional period of 12 months, effective from 12 April.

Going forward, the African Union will continue to work towards strengthening the region's ownership and will pursue its efforts to achieve greater coherence within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahel region. Our objective is to ensure increasing support and cooperation from countries in the region, including in terms of border security and intelligence sharing. An important step in that direction was completed by the signing of the memorandum of understanding for the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, concluded on 24 March between the AU Peace and Security Department and the Permanent Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel. In that context, it would be remiss not to acknowledge and to applaud the efforts of Mr. Maman Sidikou since his appointment at the helm of the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat.

The African Union will also continue to lend its support to ensuring the effective implementation of the Algiers process Peace Agreement. That remains the best way to further isolate terrorist and criminal groups. We urge all Malian parties to redouble their efforts in order to ensure the timely implementation of the key provisions of the Agreement.

Finally, the complexity and the multidimensional nature of the challenges facing the Sahel region attest to the necessity for our collective response to fully take into account the strong nexus between security

and development. We therefore need to recalibrate our respective interventions in order to better respond to the national and regional needs to address the root causes of instability and to put an end to violence. In that regard, we are taking steps to map out the various projects and programmes carried out by African Union institutions in the region in a number of areas. These cover infrastructure, human development, health, the environment, agriculture, food safety and the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime. The objective is to ensure greater synergy in our interventions and align them with the region's priorities, bearing in mind that no lasting security and peace can be achieved that is not rooted in sustainable and inclusive development.

The President: I now give the floor to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank for you for providing the European Union with this opportunity to address the Security Council at this briefing. This meeting is a further clear expression of the international community's support for the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and for the fight again terrorism in the Sahel. The European Union and its member States have long enjoyed close ties of friendship with the G-5 Sahel countries. We are neighbours, and as neighbours we share not only challenges but also hopes. For that reason, the European Union will continue to play its full part, standing shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours in the Sahel.

On behalf of the European Union, I should like to pay tribute to the efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries to foster regional cooperation in the framework of the G-5 Sahel format. We firmly support these cooperation efforts in all their dimensions.

Allow me to focus my remarks on the European Union's support for the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. That support is at the heart of not only our bilateral relations with the region, but also of the strategic partnership between the European Union and the United Nations on the maintenance of peace and crisis management. It is also a key component of the trilateral cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union.

Since the conference held in Brussels on 23 February, at which the international community pledged more than €400 million, and with the technical arrangement between the G-5 Sahel, the United Nations and the European Union now set up, the G-5 Sahel now has the international support necessary to make headway in the deployment and operationalization of its Joint Force.

We hope that the disbursement by the European Union of €10 million euros to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will allow for the rapid rollout of effective support for the Joint Force. We invite other partners to use this fully operational mechanism to channel their own financing to MINUSMA. This is key, as the kind of support that MINUSMA can provide on the ground to the Joint Force cannot be delivered directly by any other means or channel, including bilateral ones. The European Union is also preparing a €10 million contribution for the establishment and implementation of a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. We have also provided €70 million for the provision of equipment, infrastructure and services to the Joint Force.

The European Union is convinced that the Joint Force must be firmly embedded within a broader political and institutional framework to guide its operations and to ensure that is but one part of a broader regional strategy. The EU has therefore pledged €5 million to support the G-5 Sahel in the operationalization of its trust fund and the establishment of the support and steering committees and the Defence and Security Bureau of the Permanent Secretariat. We welcome this new dynamic, which bodes well for the ongoing leadership and integration of the G-5 Sahel at the national and regional levels. We welcome the efforts made in that respect by Mr. Sidikou, whose presence here today I welcome.

In this respect, it is vital to bear in mind the recent memorandum of understanding concluded recently between the African Union and the G-5 Sahel, which gives the African Union a coordination role and sees the Joint Force as part of the larger African peace architecture. In addition, the European Union will continue to manage the coordination hub for as long we deem it necessary, in order to help the Joint Force and the Permanent Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel to organize and ensure coherence in the voluntary international contributions to the Force. The hub meets once a month in Brussels, with the participation of G-5 Sahel representatives and all international partners, to take stock of existing support and identify shortfalls. It is also in contact every two weeks with the G-5 Sahel

Permanent Secretariat in Nouakchott, the G-5 Sahel presidency in Niamey and the Joint Force in Bamako.

In addition to the financial and institutional support that I have just outlined, European efforts to build defence and security capacities in the region, particularly in Mali and the Niger, are currently being reviewed in order to extend such efforts to include training and advisory functions to the Joint Force, with full respect for the prerogatives and authority of the G-5 Sahel. To that end, we are working in very close cooperation with the Commander of the Joint Force, General Dacko.

The European Union is also a strong supporter of the development and operationalization of the police component of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We believe this to be the key to ensuring to ensure a sound legal framework for any efforts to counter organized crime and terrorism. We believe also that this will help to ensure that the desired results are achieved and ensure appropriate protection for the civilian population.

The security-capacity-building missions of the European Union in Mali and the Niger are focused on the setting up by the authorities of Mali and the Niger of police components within the Joint Force, in coordination with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other partners.

It is also important not to lose sight of the security dimension of the European contribution to the economic, social and political development of the region. In this respect, the European Union has provided €8 billion in aid to the Sahel over the past seven years. The European Union is also a strong supporter of the Sahel Alliance, which was set up to promote, expand and accelerate this integrated approach to security and development and to deliver tangible results. However, we must be clear. There can be no lasting progress if no concomitant headway is made on the political track. We must more than ever before use all forms of leverage at our disposal to encourage the Malian parties to fulfil their commitments.

Allow me to conclude by noting, as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report (S/2018/432), that just one year after the African Union Peace and Security Council authorized the deployment of the Joint Force, our collective efforts have made it possible to achieve significant progress in the mobilization of resources and support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Looking ahead, it will be vital that we all continue to play our respective roles and show our support for the Force, including by providing ongoing support to MINUSMA. In so doing, we must also ensure coherence in our pledges and assistance to the Force and work with full transparency and full respect for the authority and participation of the G-5 Sahel.

Rest assured of the unflagging support of the European Union as we stand shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours in the Sahel.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Bintou Keita, the Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), Mr. Maman Sidikou, whom I welcome and thank particularly for his exemplary commitment, as well as the Permanent Observer of the African Union, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, and the Permanent Observer of the European Union, Mr. João Vale de Almeida, for their very informative briefings. They demonstrate once again the full mobilization of the international community in support of the G-5 Sahel and the fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

Almost six months after the adoption of resolution 2391 (2017), significant progress has been made in the operationalization of the Joint Force. Following the Brussels conference and the signing of the technical arrangement, the G-5 Sahel now has the necessary support to move forward with the deployment of the Joint Force. Progress on the ground is real, in particular through the operationalization of command structures, the deployment of the majority of troops expected in the Central Sector, the adoption of the operational and administrative framework of the force and the conduct of new operations. The endorsement of the human rights compliance framework is also a very positive development, since it is an essential dimension for the success of the Joint Force and its work in the service of the people. Finally, the ongoing strengthening of the Permanent Secretariat and the instruments at its disposal — particularly financial — is a step in the right direction and must be supported. All of that serves to make the Joint force a potential model for an African intervention force.

Despite our lofty ambitions and the sustained momentum, we must be realistic and reasonable in our short-term expectations. The Joint Force still faces many

challenges, including with regard to the availability of critical equipment such as communications links between its command structures and its contingents on the ground. It cannot be operationalized overnight. It is important that the G-5 Sahel States continue in the coming months to make the best use of the support provided to finalize the operationalization of the force as a matter of priority. That includes the effective deployment of all troops, as well as the transfer of authority to the Force Commander. The establishment of a police component is also crucial in order to guarantee the judicial nature of the activities of the Joint Force and the indispensable link with the criminal justice system of each of the G-5 States. Finally, all allegations of human rights violations must be investigated and, if proved, prosecuted in accordance with the principles set out in the compliance framework.

The fulfilment of pledged contributions is an important condition for the G-5 Sahel States to make progress in the operationalization of the Joint Force. Our responsibility, as partners of the G-5 Sahel, is therefore to do everything possible to ensure that such support is provided as quickly as possible, which is unfortunately not always the case today. When it comes to the Joint Force, we cannot promote expectations that are disconnected from the pace of implementation of our own support. Indeed, we must advance on both fronts.

The coordination of bilateral aid is also crucial at a time when the G-5 Sahel is facing a large influx of goodwill, with limited means of absorption. That is the point of the outstanding work carried out by the European Union through the coordination hub at the request of, and in close cooperation with, the G-5 Sahel States. That work must be continued and supported, in full association with the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat. France, for its part, continues to provide material and operational support to the G-5 Sahel States.

The activation of the support provided for under the technical arrangement, thanks to an initial contribution from the European Union, is also very important. It allows for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to provide the Joint Force with logistical and operational support directly on the ground, which cannot be provided through other funding channels, including bilateral funding. However, MINUSMA could do even more if additional funding were secured. We therefore call on donors that have not yet made their contributions to participate in the financing of this useful mechanism.

It is clear that the military response is only part of the solution and that there can be no lasting stabilization of the Sahel without making political and development progress. That is a crucial point. On the political front, we must more than ever use all the levers at our disposal to encourage the Malian parties to implement their commitments, including before the next elections. In recent weeks there have been several encouraging signals in that direction, including the inauguration of the Kidal Operational Coordination Mechanism, which must now be confirmed and enhanced. In terms of development, our objective must be to coordinate the actions of the various donors around limited and targeted priorities — defined in conjunction with the partners of the G-5 Sahel and aimed at ensuring a direct impact for the most vulnerable populations. That is the thrust of the Alliance for the Sahel's approach, which fits perfectly into the broader framework set by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

France intends to persistently bring the issue of the fight against terrorism in the Sahel to the Security Council. The situation on the ground justifies that more than ever. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/432) presents relevant and appropriate recommendations to provide the Joint Force with support that is predictable, sustainable and commensurate with the challenges. We will continue to work in that arena, taking into account the pace of the operationalization of the Joint Force on the ground and seeking to maintain consensus within the Council on that issue. But expectations remain high, and we must meet them.

In the short term, it is important to call on the international community to provide all the pledged support as soon as possible, as well as to encourage the G-5 Sahel States to continue their mobilization towards the effective deployment of the Joint force. At the end of this meeting, France will submit a proposed press statement of the Security Council along those lines.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Poland for having organized this informational meeting on developments of the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

I also thank the briefers — Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel. We also

thank Ms. Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, whose statement on behalf of the African Union we support, and Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, for the relevance of his briefing.

From the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/432), we note the progress made in operationalizing the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It also updates us on the many challenges that persist, including the mobilization of international assistance, the implementation of the technical agreement and human rights compliance framework, adopted by the G-5 Sahel countries. Despite those difficulties, the unity of action of the Security Council and the unwavering commitment of State and institutional actors have provided for the robust implementation of the recommendations of resolutions 2391 (2017) regarding logistical and operational support from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to the Joint Force. Côte d'Ivoire encourages all actors concerned, in particular the States of the G-5 Sahel, to continue their efforts to strengthen the Joint Force, which illustrates the willingness of African countries to take ownership of their collective security.

Côte d'Ivoire endorses the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General regarding the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region and the challenges to the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Progress in force generation, with the Joint Force initially scheduled to reach full operational capacity in March 2018, continues, according to the report, to fall short of the expectations of the international community. Côte d'Ivoire therefore echoes the Secretary-General's call to the G-5 Sahel States to step up dialogue with international partners to strengthen and better coordinate multifaceted support for the operationalization of the Joint Force. Rapid deployment capabilities and a strong grasp of the socio-cultural environment are comparative advantages in combating the spread of terrorism and cross-border crime in the Sahel.

MINUSMA's logistical and operational support to the Joint Force, as defined by resolution 2391 (2017), is a good example of cooperation between United Nations and African peace operations. Côte d'Ivoire therefore welcomes the signing of the technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel countries, and hopes that funding pledges will be honoured, thereby advancing the process of the operationalization of the Joint Force.

We also welcome the adoption by the G-5 Sahel States of a compliance framework intended to ensure strict respect for human rights by the Joint Force, whose operational success will depend on the buy-in and cooperation of local communities. The implementation of this compliance framework will require targeted training on respect for basic human rights for Joint Force military components and punishments that make an example of those who violate human rights.

Moreover, even if it reaches full operational capacity, the effectiveness of the Joint Force will remain dependent on current efforts to stabilize the regional political environment. The Joint Force must therefore serve as just one component of a political solution, going beyond security alone, to the ongoing crises in the Sahel.

In the same spirit, my delegation urges parties to seek a political solution to the Malian crisis via the implementation without delay by all signatories of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, signed at the end of the Algiers process in 2015. Côte d'Ivoire therefore reiterates its call on those involved in the Malian crisis to translate the commitments undertaken in the Peace Agreement into concrete actions. The success of the Agreement is the cornerstone for the restoration of lasting peace and stability in the Sahel.

The responses provided by the Joint Force in terms of security must also be supported by strategies aimed at eradicating regional vulnerabilities and enhancing the resilience of States and local populations to crises, including measures to counter poverty and unemployment, and to improve access to basic social services such as education and health. In that regard, my country welcomes the launch, in July 2017, of the Alliance for the Sahel mechanism to strengthen coordination among donors for rapid-impact projects targeting populations in the most vulnerable areas. It is important to ensure the necessary complementarity between the initiatives of the Alliance for the Sahel and the Priority Investment Programme. With better coordination, the two programmes will help reduce poverty.

Côte d'Ivoire expresses its appreciation for the financial support of bilateral and multilateral partners to the Joint Force. However, my country remains concerned about the long-term financial sustainability

of the Joint Force, given the scale of need and the delays in the provision of the funds pledged.

My country also believes that, in addition to sustainable financing, it is important to ensure proper coordination of the Joint Force with regional security initiatives in order to best manage resources.

The consequences of insecurity and instability, exacerbated by the actions of numerous armed jihadist groups and cross-border criminal networks, extend far beyond the borders of the Sahel. They pose a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security, calling for urgent coordinated and effective responses to provide for the stability and development of the local populations. Côte d'Ivoire urges all stakeholders, including the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the States of the G-5 for the-Sahel, to continue their cooperation so as to operationalize the Joint Force sufficiently to meet the security challenges in the Sahel.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks your delegation, Madam President, for having organized this important debate. We also express our appreciation for briefings provided by Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel); Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ambassador João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The situation in the Sahel presents major challenges in the areas of security, governance and development. The region continues to face a volatile and complex environment, including asymmetrical threats from armed and terrorist groups, as well as transnational crime, including trafficking in drugs, human beings and arms, among other things. Those factors not only jeopardize the stability of the countries of the region, but also represent a threat to political peace processes. They also represent a threat to the civilian population, who are worst affected.

Bolivia has insistently reiterated the need not only to analyse but especially to identify the structural causes of conflicts. In the specific case of the Sahel, those causes have had a profound impact across the region. There is no need to explain that the policies of interventionism and regime change triggered, in the aftermath of the 2011 conflict in Libya, the collateral destabilization of the Sahel, heralding chaos and horrors that continue to this very day.

Unfortunately, in addition to the precarious security situation, the Sahel presents other great challenges. The humanitarian situation requires our attention in more detail. According to data provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eight countries in the region are at risk of humanitarian crisis; out of the 150 million inhabitants, some 24 million require humanitarian assistance and 32 million are at risk of food insecurity. Another 5 million people are experiencing similar conditions, including refugees and forcibly displaced persons — without even mentioning the adverse effects produced by climate change that are further deepening the crisis in the region.

In Mali, insecurity has intensified and clashes between armed groups, asymmetrical attacks, cross-border influences and intercommunal violence have led to mass displacement, further worsening the humanitarian situation. Insecurity has spread from the northern regions to its centre. It is worth mentioning that 5.1 million people — who represent more than 27 per cent of the population of that country — live in the affected areas.

Furthermore, there are some 59,000 internally displaced persons, while almost one in five Malians suffer from food insecurity. With that in mind, we consider it essential to consolidate the political process in Mali, which will ultimately contribute to the long-term stabilization of the region.

Despite the alarming panorama in the Sahel, we wish to underscore the important efforts made by the regional and subregional organizations led by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We welcome and commend the efforts and laudable political determination of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in terms of cooperation and operationalization of their forces on the ground. The Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel is an exemplary demonstration of the coordinated efforts between the African Union and the United Nations, as well as of a high level of solidarity among member countries of the international community in general.

We consider it essential that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, within the operational framework approved by resolution 2359 (2017) and endorsed prior to that by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union,

generate the necessary capacities for the full deployment of military, police and civilian components. In that regard, we highlight the fact that two thirds of troops have already been deployed. We hope that the remaining third will be deployed as soon as possible. To that end, it is imperative that the countries that make up the Joint Force receive technical cooperation and predictable and sustainable financing. It is also essential to finalize the Joint Force operational plan scheduled at the start of this month.

Likewise, the pledges made at the high-level conference on the Sahel of the European Union and other countries held on 23 February in Brussels are an encouraging sign for the strengthening of the capabilities of the Joint Force contingents. All initiatives aimed at achieving stability and lasting peace in the region are vital. We are concerned that those pledges of financial cooperation have not yet been fully met. We reiterate once again that all initiatives in favour of achieving stability and lasting peace in the region — within the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity and independence of the countries that comprise it — are fundamental.

We also believe that financial support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) should continue. We call on countries to promptly channel their cooperation through the Organization. It is important to operationalize the technical agreement among the United Nations, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel countries in order to consolidate operational and logistical support to the Joint Force.

Furthermore, it is essential to bolster the programmes envisioned in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which provides a general framework aimed at strengthening governance, resilience and security in the countries of the region. Strengthening those capacities and, above all, ensuring their ownership and leadership by the countries of the region, on the ground is fundamental. Cooperation among the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, MINUSMA, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union is crucial within this framework.

We also believe it is necessary to improve and strengthen coordination among the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA in order to avoid duplication of tasks. We stress that each force must have a clear mandate. Intelligence and information exchange mechanisms must be consolidated in order to achieve the full operation and deployment of the Joint Force.

Finally, we believe humanitarian action in the Sahel is critical: it has saved many lives, but millions of people still urgently need it. We strongly urge and encourage the international community to continue contributing technical, economic and humanitarian support to all initiatives that support the peoples of the region in the interest of achieving stability and peace.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): Allow me to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita and Permanent Secretary Sidikou for their important briefings to the Security Council today. I also thank the Permanent Observer of the African Union (AU), Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, Mr. João Vale de Almeida, for their useful contributions to the discussion.

During the Council's visit to the Sahel in October last year, we witnessed at first-hand the strong determination of the countries of the region to address the security challenges they face. We commend them for their efforts for peace and security in the Sahel, which are being pursued under difficult circumstances. That is evidenced by the tragic loss of lives — of civilians as well as of security forces — in recent months. Let me take this opportunity to extend our condolences to all those affected.

We are encouraged by steps taken so far in the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), including the conclusion of a technical agreement and the execution of two operations by the force. It is now time for outstanding elements of resolution 2391 (2017) to be implemented. In particular, we call on the G-5 Sahel countries to deploy the remainder of the troops committed to the Joint Force and to ensure the transfer of authority of their battalions to the Force Commander. That is crucial for the full functioning and credibility of the force.

The implementation of the human rights and conduct and discipline compliance framework to prevent, investigate, address and publicly report violations of human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law is also critical for the long-term success of the force. We welcome the seed funding for the compliance framework provided by the Peacebuilding Fund. We are preparing to provide

further support through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The functioning of the Joint Force and the compliance framework will be dependent on a functional civilian and police component. For that reason, we welcome the decision taken by the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee last week in Ouagadougou to continue to deepen collaboration between the police forces of the G-5 Sahel countries. We also welcome the support being provided by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime in this area.

We encourage all parties to actively explore how the concrete contribution and perspectives of women can be ensured and integrated in the implementation of the compliance framework and the operational planning of the force, as well as in the police and civilian components.

We welcome funding pledges made so far in support of the G-5 Sahel, including at the Brussels conference in February. We call on all donors to swiftly disburse funds to allow for the operationalization of the force. We hope that donors will earmark funds for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to provide engineering support for the camps of the Joint Force in line with resolution 2391 (2017). That is urgently needed, not least in the light of the continuously deteriorating security situation.

We welcome the Secretary-General's strong engagement with the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The options for further United Nations support to the Joint Force laid out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) must be seriously considered. As we move forward, predictable and reliable funding is vital for the Joint Force to be able to carry out planning and operations in an effective, predictable and sustainable manner. It is also essential if the Council is to ensure that our repeated calls for regional ownership, demands for accountability and expectations of force output are matched with adequate resources and support.

The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is one of many instruments that make up an integrated, sustainable and regional approach to the situation in the Sahel. The primacy of politics should guide that work, and we agree with the Secretary-General that the Joint Force should be embedded within a larger political and institutional framework as part of a broader and more comprehensive strategy for the region. The establishment of the support group and coordination with regional structures and organizations are important elements in that regard. We also encourage a continued and deepened cooperation and dialogue among the United Nations, the AU and the G-5 Sahel.

Sustainable peace and prosperity in the Sahel region can be achieved only through political solutions, respect for human rights, an equal distribution of social and economic opportunities to the population and a restored and expanded State presence across the region. The situation in Mali is key to that aim. It is therefore important to ensure that the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali proceeds more rapidly and that peaceful, fair and transparent elections are held in July.

The challenges facing the Sahel are many and interlinked. They have implications not only for the millions of people facing insecurity and hunger but also for the wider region and, indeed, the world. The collective efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries to address those challenges, step up development efforts and move towards the full operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force are essential and deserve our full support.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), for their extensive and detailed briefings on the activities of the Group and the general situation in the region. We also thank Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and Ambassador João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

We align ourselves with the statement made earlier on behalf of the African Union.

My country's Government is following the situation in the Sahel region closely. We are concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the region, particularly as a result of the escalatimg terrorist attacks in northern and central Mali, as well as in the border regions of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our firm condemnation of terrorist attacks on the civilian population, the defence and security forces of the countries of the region and the international forces present in Mali, particularly those of the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and France's Operation Barkhane.

As the Peace and Security Council of the African Union expressed in its statement of 23 March, we believe that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is currently the best long-term alternative where the security of the region is concerned. Equatorial Guinea pays tribute to the leaders of the member States of the Group — Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad — for their determination and sacrifices in promoting peace, security and stability in the Sahel through an increasingly effective fight against terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crime. However, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his report (S/2018/432) of 8 May, the implementation of resolution 2391 (2017) means that the full operationalization of the Force and securing international financing are currently the main problems and challenges facing us. Progress in making the Joint Force a fully operational structure and securing its international funding has so far been slow and difficult.

It is therefore vital to underline the importance of sustainable and safe support for the efforts of the countries of the region. In that regard, we express our gratitude to bilateral and multilateral partners for their multifaceted assistance to the countries of the Sahel-Saharan region, and we welcome the announcements of the contributions made at the international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels on 23 February with the aim of securing permanent financing and sustainable resources to assist in operationalizing the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It is crucial that all States and organizations fulfil that commitment as soon as possible in order to help the Joint Force fulfil its mandate. In that context, it is also essential that Africans themselves spearhead efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism. The Rwandan Government's financial contribution in support of its sister countries of the G-5 Sahel is a step in the right direction. We reaffirm the importance of the Nouakchott Process for promoting peace and security in the region and intensifying its activities to unify all stabilization and development efforts in the Sahel.

Despite the clear will and commitment of partners and the international community to help the region, we believe that the factors that foster Islamist extremism in the Sahel must be considered. The impact of terrorist activities, including those perpetrated by groups that benefit from transnational organized crime, cannot be resolved by security-focused interventions alone. My Government believes that the solution to violent extremism in the Sahel is a comprehensive approach. The growing insecurity in the region demands that we do more than contain violence. We must build a resilient society and institutions that safeguard human security. We also need a broad strategy that attacks the threat's capacity to regenerate itself and that is not limited to merely defending local borders. Military forces can defeat terrorist forces, but it is social and development policies that will prevent their re-emergence through broader strategies.

Finally, legitimate, socially oriented action by the G-5 Sahel is crucial to gaining local and regional legitimacy. That is why it must protect humanitarian law, respond with justice and undertake to protect violated human rights and international humanitarian law.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me first express our deep appreciation to our four briefers today for their briefings, leadership and action.

Recent attacks have demonstrated the increasingly precarious security situation in the Sahel. We commend the decision of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to join forces to counter terrorism, transnational crime and the smuggling of drugs, weapons and human beings. That decision demonstrates the willingness of the G-5 Sahel countries to take ownership of their own security and deserves the full support of the Council and that of the wider membership of the United Nations. We therefore pay tribute to the important efforts of the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

We fully recognize that it is not an easy task to set up a regional force in the complex security and political environment the Group is dealing with. We therefore warmly welcome the significant steps already taken by the G-5 Sahel and its member States. However, it is also clear from the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) that some important challenges remain. In that context, I will focus on three elements that we believe will define the Joint Force's future and determine its chances of success: first, the need for an integrated approach; secondly, adherence to human rights and the rule of law; and thirdly, adequate financial resources.

First, on the need for an integrated approach, as the Secretary-General emphasized in his report, the Joint Force's success is directly linked to progress on

the peace process in Mali, a point also just made by our colleague from Sweden. The parties involved must take the necessary steps to ensure enduring peace in Mali. As I said, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is an essential means for countering terrorism, transnational crime and human smuggling. However, we must realize that those are only symptoms. The underlying root causes must also be addressed to bring lasting peace and stability. In that regard, we welcome the G-5 Sahel's development agenda and the initiative by France and Germany to increase international coordination and cooperation with the launch of the Alliance for the Sahel.

That brings me to my second point, on the importance of human rights, the rule of law and the police component. The Joint Force can be effective only if it enjoys the trust of the population. The worrying news of human rights violations in Mali shows the vital importance of rigorous monitoring and accountability mechanisms. We welcome the commitment of the G-5 Sahel and the Joint Force to the African Union's Compliance Framework on Human Rights, Conduct and Discipline and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and to ensuring proper legal follow-up, which they made very clear at the Sahel conference in Brussels in February.

The follow-up meetings held in the region are important first steps, but further progress in the coming months will be essential. To ensure adequate follow-up, we encourage the G-5 Sahel to speed up the establishment of its police component, which should include an adequately trained and equipped investigation team. A strong police component is vital to taking effective action against terrorism, transnational crime and the smuggling of migrants, threats that not only undermine the stability of the Sahel but also pose a serious security concern to Europe. Sufficient resources should be made available to step up these efforts. The same applies to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) Justice and Corrections Section, which plays an important role and should be strengthened. As a proud troop-contributing country to MINUSMA, we will continue to offer our support for efforts to curb such threats.

That brings me to my third point, on the importance of adequate financial resources. We fully recognize that sustainable and predictable long-term financing will further contribute to the Joint Force's legitimacy and effectiveness. I would like to point out here that in addition to our contribution via the European Union, as Ambassador Vale de Almeida just highlighted, the Netherlands has committed an additional €5 million on a bilateral basis. We look forward to further tangible progress on the Force's operationalization as soon as possible, something that will be especially needed for the human rights framework and police component in the next few months. We stand ready to discuss a more sustainable way of financing in due course. We recognize the importance of MINUSMA's support in further operationalizing the Force, but we want to reiterate that this cannot come to the detriment of MINUSMA core tasks.

In conclusion, the coming months will be crucial in deciding the future of the Joint Force. Let us turn funds into equipment, commitments into training and words into action, and let us work together to achieve concrete progress on the ground.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We commend the presidency of Poland for this opportunity to discuss the activities of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the ways in which the international community can support the Group's Joint Force. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, for their comprehensive briefings. We congratulate Mr. Sidikou on his new appointment and wish him every success in the discharge of his office, for which he can count on our full support.

Generally speaking, our delegation welcomes the progress that has been made in mobilizing resources for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. We also commend the improved cooperation of the G-5 Sahel member States with the United Nations, African Union and European Union, which has resulted in the conclusion of the technical agreement. We believe that making the G-5 Sahel Joint Force fully operational will positively reinforce the joint efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Malian national security forces and other mechanisms to bring peace and stability to the region.

However, the security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate due to increased violence by terrorist and extremist groups and their further

expansion to central Mali and northern Burkina Faso. That insecurity is further aggravated by such groups' alliances with others involved in transnational organized crime, drug and human trafficking and arms trading out of neighbouring Libya. We therefore support the recommendations in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2018/432) and would like to highlight some observations for the Council's consideration.

First, the Joint Force has the potential to be a bright example of an African solution to African problems. However, to succeed, the Sahel countries need the unanimous political support of the Council, the technical expertise of Member States and predictable and long-term sustainable funding from the donor community. In turn, the G-5 Sahel States must speed up the process of making the Joint Force fully functional by resolving its command-and-control issues.

Secondly, we must ensure complementarity and strengthened coordination between the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with all the security forces in the region, including MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the various regional frameworks, particularly the African Union-led Nouakchott Process. The Joint Force should find its place within the larger political and institutional framework and strategy that we are planning for the subregion, and that also calls for better coherence between the Sahel countries themselves.

Thirdly, a military approach alone will not address the instability in the region that has resulted from the accumulation of problems, of which violent extremism is only the most recent layer. The Joint Force's counter-terrorism activities must therefore go hand in hand with addressing the root causes of conflict and instability, which can be resolved or minimized to a greater or lesser degree by strengthening local governance, reducing poverty and tribal rivalries, providing basic services and improving job creation. Mitigating the impact of climate change should be another priority. Meeting these objectives will therefore require better linkages between the Joint Force and the G-5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat, whose capacities must be reinforced in order to achieve a performance capable of meeting these enormous challenges.

Fourthly, the situation on the ground requires innovative policies for preventing and addressing violent conflicts and scourge of terrorism. My country therefore proposes using a three-pronged strategy to resolve regional conflicts by strengthening the security-development nexus, as Mr. Sidikou underlined today, along with revamping the regional approach and streamlining the United Nations system to deliver as one. Such a comprehensive overall strategy should be a very effective and sustainable tool for addressing the common threats facing the Sahel and neighbouring countries.

Finally, we strongly support the United Nations peacebuilding programmes in the region in this regard and call on the Organization to finalize its integrated strategy for the Sahel. We also welcome subregional efforts aimed at building resilience in human and environmental systems and increasing peace and prosperity in the region. We particularly commend the initiative of the Alliance for the Sahel, which is expected to bring in a total of €6 billion to finance development projects for the next five years, such as the creation of 1 million jobs and support for rural areas through improved infrastructure and services. In joining the multilateral action in this area, Kazakhstan remains committed to helping the countries of the Sahel to fulfil their vision for peace, progress and prosperity.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita and Permanent Secretary Sidikou for their excellent briefings. We are encouraged to hear that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) continues to make progress towards full operationalization. We also thank Ambassadors Mohammed and Almeida for their briefings and insights from the perspectives of the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU). The engagement of the AU and the EU is invaluable as we work together to improve the prospects for peace, security and opportunity in the Sahel region.

The G-5 Sahel and its Joint Force continue to be a priority for the United States. We support the holistic and African-led approach of the G-5 Sahel as the best way to achieve long-term security and development in the Sahel, and we are committed to engaging bilaterally with the G-5 Sahel member States. While much of the Council's focus, as well as that of the international community, has been on the modalities of support to the Joint Force, it is important to note that security solutions alone will not solve the underlying political and economic issues. As many here have noted, security, governance and development are closely linked and countries cannot achieve long-term security without good governance, economic development and respect for human rights. The United States looks forward to

seeing the G-5 Sahel member States build on their good foundations and the G-5 Sahel's priority investment projects. We should therefore not lose sight of the peace process in Mali or the importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict. The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process remains the best tool that we have for beginning to resolve the situation in northern Mali, and we urge the parties to implement what they agreed to as part of the Agreement. The Council should consider using all of its available mechanisms, including the sanctions regime adopted under resolution 2374 (2017), in order to foster better political outcomes. There is simply too much at stake for Mali and the region to continue waiting for substantive results.

We are encouraged by the Joint Force's operationalization, but we all recognize that there is a long way to go. We urge all of the donors who made generous pledges at the February conference in Brussels to disburse those funds as soon as possible. We also encourage them to contribute to the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for logistical support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as outlined in the technical agreement, in order to expedite engineering projects for the Joint Force.

We are all deeply concerned about the likelihood of violent extremist efforts undermining the security situation in the region. Nevertheless, as the Joint Force's operationalization continues, respect for international human rights and international humanitarian law will be paramount. To that end, we salute the EU and the Peacebuilding Fund's contributions towards the establishment and implementation of the human rights compliance framework included in the technical agreement. However, we were very concerned to hear reports of an incident in Boulékéssi, Burkina Faso, last weekend, where what may have been a violent extremist attack on a Malian soldier under G-5 Sahel command was followed by the deaths of more than a dozen others. We anxiously await the results of the MINUSMA, G-5 Sahel and Government investigations into those deaths, and we call for additional investigations, as appropriate.

Although we all agree that the purpose of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is an important one, the implementation of the technical agreement should not overstretch MINUSMA. We remain concerned that the Mission does not have the capacity to take on additional tasks as it struggles simultaneously to protect itself and fulfil its mandate. We look to its excellent leadership to make the best determination of when and how to support the Joint Force in the face of the myriad and unpredictable security challenges that MINUSMA faces on a daily basis.

The United States believes that a combination of bilateral and regional support by the Sahel countries and international stakeholders can best address the ongoing financial and logistical needs of the Joint Force. As Ambassador Haley stated in December (see S/PV.8129), the technical agreement represents the full extent of any support role that the United Nations should play beyond continued coordination and technical assistance on a voluntary basis. In February, the parties signed the technical agreement in Brussels and hundreds of millions of dollars were pledged to support the G-5 Sahel and its Joint Force. We would like to reiterate our principled position in that regard, which is our objection to authorization of the use of United Nations assessed funds for the Joint Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, a Security Council mandate. The United States will not accept any proposal to move such an authorization forward in the Security Council.

The United States has contributed significant resources to the G-5 Sahel member States, providing more than $822 million in security assistance since 2012, and last October we pledged an additional $60 million directly to the Joint Force's successful deployment and operationalization. We are working closely with the EU coordination mechanism to optimize that contribution, and we encourage other donors to do likewise. The United States believe that that is the best way to increase the G-5 Sahel members' capacity to fight the terrorist and security challenges that they face, and we intend to look for additional ways to support the Joint Force in the near future.

Stability in the Sahel is a multilayered challenge of security, politics, development and humanitarian causes. The attention that those causes have received from the region and its dedicated partners is already leading to better outcomes. Continued international engagement will be one component of that process, but enduring success in the region will ultimately be determined by the G-5 Sahel member States themselves.

Mr. Al-Jarallah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping

Operations, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations for their valuable briefings.

To start with, we are pleased with the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) on the latest developments around the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017). We welcome the technical agreement signed in February by the G-5 Sahel States, the United Nations and the European Union, in line with the provisions of the resolution, and we commend their efforts. We followed with great interest the international high-level conference on the Sahel held in Brussels on 23 February, which raised funding to cover the Joint Force's operations for its first year. We welcome the preliminary steps taken to operationalize the Joint Force, and we wish it every success in its efforts to confront the common dangers facing the States of the region. We fully support it in its aim to prevent the proliferation of the terrorist and extremist activity that has significantly damaged the region. In that regard, we would like to recall the engagement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in supporting the Joint Force in its efforts, which resulted in OIC resolution 45/51-POL on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, adopted during the annual conference of its Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka at the beginning of this month.

The recent developments mentioned in the Secretary-General's report have further contributed to strengthening the Joint Force's capacity to achieve its goals. We appreciate the efforts of the various United Nations bodies in providing technical support and training and helping to set up the Joint Force in various areas, including logistics and human rights. The international community and the United Nations must continue their efforts to bolster the capacities of the Force. We call on the G-5 Sahel States to accelerate the deployment of Joint Force contingents, ensure the continuity of military operations and further back up the progress that has been made in combating the terrorist groups operating in the region.

The Joint Force is operating in a deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. It has to deal with a range of threats, including cross-border and international crime and the trafficking of weapons and drugs in the region, especially around border areas, where the States have very little control, which enables such items to be smuggled from one country to another. We should step up our efforts to control such activities through cooperation between the Joint Force and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We support UNODC's training seminars, which play an important role in strengthening local authorities' capacities to prevent the flow of weapons and drugs and trafficking in human beings.

In addition to the very difficult security situation, the Joint Force is also operating within the framework of a peace operation that is making limited progress, which in turn has a negative impact on the Force's ability to combat terrorism in Mali. We must promote that peace process and remain committed to the recently signed road map, which will have positive impact on the work of the Joint Force. Nor should we underestimate the importance of development in promoting stability in the region. We are pleased with the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, and we welcome the continued cooperation among the States of the region and the United Nations to strengthen their capacity in the areas of the rule of law, governance and law enforcement, which will have a direct effect on stability and will help create an environment conducive to supporting the work of the Joint Force. On that point, we would like to highlight the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's request to the Islamic Development Bank for funding to be provided to social and economic projects in the G-5 Sahel countries, particularly those aimed at promoting the role of young people and the empowerment of women.

We would like to reiterate our support for the efforts of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to prevent the spread of threats in the region. It would not be able to achieve its goals without the support of the United Nations, and Kuwait is ready to work with all the members of the Security Council to chart the Joint Force's future plans.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to express my appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. We are indeed very pleased to see Mr. Maman Sidikou in his new capacity and we thank him for sharing the perspective of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We are also grateful to Ambassador Fatima Mohammed, whose statement we align ourselves with, and Mr. Vale de Almeida for their very useful remarks.

The Sahel region continues to face growing threats from terrorists and other international organized criminals. Coupled with the lack of progress in the Malian peace process, this is exacerbating the situation. The scale and sophistication of the recent terrorist attacks, including yesterday's incidents, as Ms. Keita mentioned, is unprecedented. It once again underscores how important it is that we continue fighting this menace in a coordinated manner by supporting the efforts of the countries in the region, and we want to reinforce what Ambassador Fatima said earlier in that regard.

The role of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel remains essential, and we appreciate the military operations it has conducted in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. We note the progress made towards its full operationalization, including through the creation of a dedicated trust fund, the establishment of a coordination and liaison office for its headquarters in Sévaré and the setting up of the G-5 Sahel's Permanent Secretariat in Nouakchott.

Nevertheless, we also recognize the enormous challenges that must still be addressed to accelerate the Joint Force's full operationalization, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) and indicated in today's briefing. In particular, we understand the Joint Force's urgent need for air assets for intelligence gathering, transportation and communication equipment. In the absence of transport assets, communication between the sector headquarters and command posts, as well as the battalion camps, no doubt presents a serious challenge. Constructing the camp infrastructure and enhancing the Joint Force's headquarters should also be a matter of priority so as to expedite its full deployment and operationalization.

We note the series of high-level meetings that have taken place over the past couple of months to mobilize international support for the Joint Force. We appreciate the financial pledges made by bilateral and multilateral partners, including at the high-level international conference on the Sahel held in February in Brussels. I would be remiss if I failed to commend Rwanda in particular for its demonstration of African solidarity by contributing $1 million in support of the Joint Force's operationalization. We hope that all the recent financial pledges will be redeemed. In the light of the serious difficulties on the ground, as we heard in the briefing today and as was also underscored in the Secretary-General's report, the urgency of this matter cannot be overemphasized.

We welcome the signing of the technical arrangement between the G-5 Sahel countries — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and the Niger — and the United Nations and the European Commission for the provision of operational and logistical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, in line with resolution 2391 (2017). We note the two options proposed by the Secretary-General in his report for more extensive and comprehensive United Nations support to the Joint Force, using assessed contributions to ensure sustainable and predictable long-term financing and support. We hope the Council will seriously consider them and make an appropriate decision in due course.

The development of a compliance framework, in consultation with the G-5 Sahel States and the relevant United Nations offices and departments, designed to prevent and address possible adverse effects of the Joint Force's operations on local communities, is also encouraging. We welcome the memorandum of understanding signed between the G-5 Sahel and the African Union Commission for the provision of equipment, as well as technical and financial support, towards the operationalization of the Joint Force. We also welcome the decision last month by the African Union Peace and Security Council to extend the deployment of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for an additional 12 months.

The complex and difficult challenges facing the Sahel region cannot be effectively addressed without tackling the root causes of instability. That is why we agree with the Secretary-General that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is only one part of the broader response. Implementing a comprehensive and holistic strategy on the basis of ownership and partnership with the countries of the Sahel region is the best way forward. In that connection, we note the work that is being done to recalibrate the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and welcome the appointment of a special adviser for the Sahel. We also note the strategic consultative meeting on the Sahel recently organized by the African Union in Nouakchott with the aim of aligning the efforts of the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners in support of the security and development efforts of countries in the region. The region certainly needs the enhanced and sustained engagement of the international community, and it will continue to be crucial to ensure greater synergy and coherence in the efforts of the African

Union, the United Nations and other international partners in support of the countries of the region.

It is now all the more apparent that the security and development of the Sahel has broader implications for global stability, and we hope the Council will continue to support the efforts of the countries of the region to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the African Union and the European Union (EU). I think that the briefings by all these representatives together are a perfect illustration of the partnership approach taken so far and which we need to continue.

The United Kingdom fully supports the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Its growing transborder capability, coupled with its regional expertise and knowledge, are crucial to tackling the cross-border threat posed by terrorist organizations and instability in the Sahel.

Since we visited as a Council last year, a lot has been done to build on the existing work that we saw on that trip. However, those efforts must be redoubled if full operationalization across all sectors is to be achieved in the coming months and the cross-border threat addressed. As set out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432), mobilizing funding is a key issue affecting the Joint Force. Despite many donors' generosity while pledging, the majority of those pledges have still not been disbursed, disrupting operations and long-term planning. In addition to our development and humanitarian funding of $380 million over the past three years and our contributions through the EU funds, the United Kingdom has pledged an additional $2.7 million for infrastructure support to the element of the Niger component of the Joint Force and for helicopter-borne medical-evacuation support. We intend to make that funding accessible next month and we strongly urge all partners to make good on the financial commitments they have made to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force as soon as possible.

The United Kingdom recognizes the contribution of the regional actors working for stability in the Sahel, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Operation Barkhane and various EU missions, among them the EU Training Mission in Mali. We strongly encourage strengthening the coordination mechanisms among those actors to ensure that efforts are not duplicated.

In addition to those regional activities, it is important that individual countries continue to take action at the national level. In Mali, we welcome the recent progress that has been made on the peace process, and we hope that this momentum will continue up to and beyond July's presidential elections. Political efforts must be redoubled if we are to genuinely implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We, as the Security Council, should not hesitate to use all the tools available, including sanctions against any who obstruct that process, if necessary. We particularly urge the full participation of women in the implementation and monitoring of the Peace Agreement.

Military operations, including by the Joint Force, will succeed only if they are based firmly within a larger framework of improved security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian protection. In that regard, we urge the G-5 Sahel States to take forward the establishment of the support group in order to address the challenges facing the Sahel in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Development assistance must address the drivers of conflict, for example by tackling marginalization or helping to promote more accountable governance, and development work must be linked to the G-5 Sahel and, indeed, to MINUSMA's operations. It is important to ensure that military operations go hand in hand with the provision of services for the population. We therefore look forward to seeing the details of a revamped integrated strategy for the Sahel, which must have a holistic, cross-United Nations and cross-border approach to conflict prevention at its heart. This is where the sustaining peace concept will be tested. Let us hope that we will not have to relearn the lessons that we have learned in many other theatres.

Any military action must of course be conducted in full compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law. We welcome the endorsement of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework, as part of the technical agreement among the EU, the G-5 Sahel and the United Nations, and the G-5 Sahel's commitment to implementing it with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and MINUSMA. Failure to protect civilians will feed extremist recruitment and put future funding contributions at risk. In that regard, I support the

comments made by my American colleague about the recent incident.

A solution that addresses the underlying causes of instability is the only way to ensure long-term security in the region. The ultimate solution will be a political one, with development assistance and military support. It must be inclusive and ensure the full and equal participation of the whole of society, including women, if it is to succeed. It must provide economic opportunities and present an attractive alternative to extremism. That is the best way to improve the lives of those who live in the Sahel, and it is the best way to improve our collective peace and security.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of today's meeting and the briefings by Ms. Bintou Keita, Mr. Maman Sidikou and Ambassadors Fatima Kyari Mohammed and João Vale de Almeida.

Peru has been following the difficult humanitarian situation and the continuing deterioration of security in the Sahel region with concern. We condemn the latest terrorist attacks and the violent extremism that is especially prevalent in the border areas shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. Today we would like to highlight three points that we consider fundamental to achieving lasting peace and stability in the Sahel.

My first point is about coordinating responses. The various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed in the field must maintain political and operational coherence, reflecting and responding to the needs and priorities of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries, as well as the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we welcome the signing of a technical agreement by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the European Union and the members of the G-5 Sahel, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017).

We underscore the importance of the operational link that has been established between the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and MINUSMA. We also want to highlight the creation of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund to channel complementary donations and the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to extend the mandate of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for another year. We believe that such initiatives should serve to accelerate the required strengthening of the operational capabilities of the Joint Force, especially when a lack of adequate financing jeopardizes the technical cooperation that MINUSMA is called on to provide. We emphasize that financing must be foreseeable and sustainable.

My second point concerns the root causes of the conflict. As has been said, responses to the critical situation in the Sahel must go beyond the military dimension. What is needed is a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict, promoting the development and relevance of human rights, together with enhanced security. We consider it particularly important to promote the rule of law and economic growth, deal with the effects of climate change and increase women and young people's participation in national processes, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel provides an adequate framework for working to strengthen governance, security and development in the region, and we stress the importance of providing it with adequate resources.

My third point has to do with the peace process in Mali. We note with concern its lack of progress and the deteriorating security situation, which are fostering further radicalization in various areas of the region. We hope that the upcoming elections in Mali can serve to strengthen institutional frameworks and democratic governance and relaunch a political dialogue. We emphasize the importance of promoting extensive involvement on the part of citizens and a greater awareness of the need to include and address the needs of vulnerable groups and minorities. It is also essential to pay special attention to the links between cross-border organized crime and terrorist groups and to strengthen the regional response to those scourges.

I would like to conclude by expressing our support for the efforts of the G-5 Sahel member countries, as well as those of MINUSMA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, among the other agencies and actors that are committed to achieving a sustainable peace. We believe that the G-5 Sahel is a clear example of how African countries are capable of assuming greater responsibilities in the shared work of promoting peace and security on the continent. However, that requires the strong support of the international

community, including the Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for her very informative briefing. We listened to the statement delivered by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Mr. João Vale de Almeida, with interest.

The African view of the problems of the region set out by Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), and Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, deserves extremely serious attention from the member States of the Security Council. We agree with their alarming assessments that the level of the threats to security and stability in that part of Africa is unprecedentedly high. The forces of international terrorism in the Sahel are stronger, unfortunately. They have ramped up their activity and are seeking to expand geographically. New radical groups and leaders are appearing. We know the reasons for this. One of the most important is the collapse of Libya as a State, which came about as a result of foreign interference in its internal affairs. We believe that if the situation there is not normalized, it will be difficult to stabilize the Sahel sustainably.

We welcome the 2017 initiative of the States of the G-5 for the Sahel to create the Joint Force to combat terrorism and organized crime. A lot has been achieved during the past year on the practical front. Two successful military operations have been conducted. The completion of staffing capacity at headquarters is in its final stages and mechanisms for financing it are in place. We expect concrete plans for continuing joint operations against the militias to be announced very soon.

At the same time, we were disturbed to hear that the process of forming the G-5 Sahel units has slowed down recently. Progress has not been made in setting up military bases and providing them with adequate quantities of weapons, which will have a serious impact on the forces' readiness to counter the current threats. Those issues will not be resolved without ensuring stable and predictable funding for the Sahel States' joint military structures that are being put in place in the region. In that regard, we call on the external donors that have made respective pledges, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, in the framework of its mandate, and the G-5 Sahel countries to resolve these issues as quickly as possible.

We believe firmly in the importance of further coordinated steps on the part of both African States and the international community for combating extremism in the Sahel-Sahara region. Clearly this evil cannot be eradicated through purely military means. It will be important to work effectively to counter the expansion of extremist ideology, deal effectively with the acute socioeconomic problems of the countries of the region and strengthen their State institutions. In that connection, we note the key role that the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will play in tackling those tasks.

Russia is considering the possibility of establishing effective cooperation with the G-5 Sahel States in addressing their core regional problems. We are already providing military and technical assistance to a number of States in the region and helping to train military and police personnel. We will continue to contribute to strengthening the military potential of the G-5 Sahel military forces so that their Joint Force can become an effective instrument for restoring and maintaining peace in West Africa.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting. We also thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Maman Sidikou, Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel; Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, for their briefings.

In December 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2391 (2017) on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Since its adoption, progress has been made in the Joint Force's deployment and support, which China welcomes. At the same time, however, the Sahel region is facing multifaceted challenges, including a fragile security situation, spreading terrorism and increasingly serious transnational organized crime. We call on the international community to increase its involvement and to take an integrated approach to those challenges. I would like to make the following points.

First, we need to step up support for the Joint Force, which represents an important contribution to

peace and security in Africa and the world at large. The international community should fully respect and maximize Africa's leadership in seeking solutions to African problems, and should support the countries of the region and regional organizations in their efforts to safeguard peace and security in the Sahel region. The G-5 Sahel States, the European Union and the United Nations held a successful pledging conference for the Joint Force and signed the technical agreement requested in resolution 2391 (2017). The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is ready to provide its support, and China expresses its appreciation for that. We hope that MINUSMA will actively provide the support needed once necessary conditions such as funding are in place, and will evaluate its experience in practice. China commends the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/432) for submitting proposals on support, which we will study with other Member States.

Secondly, the political settlement of the relevant regional hotspot issues should be prioritized. On a basis of respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned, the international community should actively support the countries of the region in taking forward the peace process, promoting national reconciliation and continuing to work to calm and resolve the relevant hotspot issues, thereby helping to create conditions conducive to lasting peace and stability in the Sahel region. Right now, support should be given to all the relevant parties in Mali in order to expedite the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and seriously address the spillover effect on the Sahel of issues outside the region, such as the Libyan crisis, in order to minimize their negative impact.

Thirdly, support for counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel region should be increased, given the gravity of the situation. The international community should ramp up its support and help the relevant United Nations counter-terrorism agencies play an active role in that regard. Terrorism is the common enemy of all humankind. We must crack down on it resolutely, whenever and wherever it appears. All countries should adhere to unified standards and act with resolve to eradicate all the terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council. The international counter-terrorism operations should ensure the leading role of the United Nations, including the Security Council, while upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the other universally recognized basic norms governing international relations, and strengthening coordination.

Fourthly, we should appreciate and make the best possible use of the role of regional mechanisms. China values the positive role that African countries and organizations such as the G-5 Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States have been playing in seeking solutions to the issues in the Sahel. The international community should strengthen its communication and coordination with the countries of the region and with regional and subregional organizations, and work to organically align the individual strategies of the countries and the region with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, maximizing their relative advantages to create synergies. The United Nations is revising its integrated strategy, and China hopes that the those efforts will take serious account of the views of the countries in the region and meet the real needs of the countries concerned.

China supports African countries in seeking African solutions to African problems. We also support Africa's regional and subregional organizations, including the G-5 Sahel, in their efforts to address the problems of peace and security in Africa. We are ready to work with the members of the Council and the international community to make positive contributions to the security and development of the Sahel region.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

To start with, let me thank today's briefers — Ms. Bintou Keita, Mr. Maman Sidikou, Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed and Mr. João Vale de Almeida — for their very informative statements on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and recent developments in the region.

The root causes of conflict in the region, which have created challenges in the areas of good governance and development, are similar in nature and interdependent. The problems and challenges faced are cross-border in nature. In that context, cooperation among neighbouring countries and within regional organizations is crucial for achieving tangible and long-lasting progress. The G-5 Sahel, together with its Joint Force, is an example of such comprehensive cooperation.

We express our full support for the mandate of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and hope that, with the support of

the international community, it will soon achieve full operationalization. Furthermore, the operations of the Joint Force must be conducted in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Poland supports the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with in-kind assistance. We have provided the contingent of Chadian troops operating within the force with considerable material support. Moreover, we recently decided to provide additional support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force through Polish training capacities. Responding to the request made by the G-5 Sahel countries, Poland announced its readiness to conduct training sessions in the area of countering improvised explosive devices.

Lastly, Poland would like to fully express its support for the actions taken by the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union and the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as to underscore our recognition of the key role played by regional partners in military operations in the Sahel.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8267

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8267th meeting
Thursday, 24 May 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pronin
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

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18-15893 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/492, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2417 (2018).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): I deliver this statement on behalf of the co-penholders that put forward resolution 2417 (2018), on conflict and hunger, that is, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Sweden and the Netherlands.

Tuesday's open debate (see S/PV.8264) on the protection of civilians, which you organized, Madam President, provided ample evidence of the timely nature of our resolution, and of its necessity. As stated in the report (S/2018/462) of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians, the number of food insecure people is increasing, mainly due to armed conflict. Recent reports from the World Food Programme and the United Natiions Food and Agriculture Organization confirm that deeply concerning trend.

Today's resolution is a landmark text, wherein the Security Council for the first time unequivocally condemns the use of starvation as a method of warfare. It also clearly acknowledges the fact that conflict can lead to increased food insecurity, and recognizes the need to break the vicious cycle between armed conflict and food insecurity. Most important, the text places the most vulnerable people in conflict situations firmly on the agenda of the Council. Innocent civilians suffering from hunger due to the consequences of war are at the heart of the text, as is respect for international humanitarian law and accountability.

I would like to highlight three important aspects of the resolution. First, with regard to early warning, the Secretary-General will brief the Council whenever situations occur where people are severely food insecure as a consequence of war. Secondly, on humanitarian assistance, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access must be granted, in line with international humanitarian law. Thirdly, with regard to utilizing its toolkit, the Council can consider sanctioning, as appropriate, those who unlawfully deny humanitarian access or starve civilians. It can also task peacekeeping operations with facilitating humanitarian access.

It is truly an encouraging sign that the Council has managed to agree unanimously on some of the basic norms of humanity. We would like to thank all Council members for their genuinely constructive engagement throughout the negotiation process. Today we managed to take another significant step towards making the use of starvation as a method of warfare a crime of the past.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of resolution 2417 (2018), the first to recognize the clear link between armed conflict and hunger. We thank the Netherlands, Kuwait, Sweden and Côte d'Ivoire for their work.

Millions of civilians in situations of armed conflict continue to suffer alarming levels of hunger caused overwhelmingly by political and military action. The Council's unanimous adoption of this text today underlines its belief that starvation is not something that parties to conflict are powerless to prevent, and signals our shared determination to take action. Today's resolution calls on parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from using starvation as a method of

warfare. Its relevant obligations relate to humanitarian access, the protection of infrastructure critical to providing food to civilians, and the importance of refraining from attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects that are essential to the survival of civilian populations.

We know that conflict is the main contributor to hunger in South Sudan, for instance. In February 2017, famine was declared in Unity state, where some 100,000 people faced starvation. The declaration led to an escalated humanitarian response in the affected areas, and the famine status was lifted in June 2017. Sadly, that situation has since deteriorated. In January 1 million people were already severely food insecure, a 40 per cent increase compared with the same time last year. United Nations agencies say that the food-security outlook in South Sudan has never been as dire as it is now. Nearly two thirds of the population — more than 7 million people — will need food aid to stave off starvation in the May-to-July lean season, which corresponds to the hiatus between the depletion of food stocks and the next harvest. The lesson is clear: humanitarian aid can only ever be a sticking plaster. The solutions are political. In today's resolution, the Security Council calls on the Secretary-General to provide it with early warning about conflict-related famine and food-insecurity conditions. In that regard, we look forward to more regular reporting on conditions within the context of country-specific situations.

Today the Security Council has been clear in denouncing the use of hunger as a tool of war and in calling on all parties to conflicts to recall their obligations to the most vulnerable. We look forward to working with the other members of the Council on this vital issue.

Ms. French (United States of America): We are pleased to join you, Madam President, in welcoming the adoption of resolution 2417 (2018), the first to recognize the clear links between armed conflict and famine and the important role that the Council can play in addressing this challenge. The text of the resolution is one that we have been glad to sponsor. We would like to thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kuwait, Sweden and Côte d'Ivoire, the members of the core group, for their work in bringing it to fruition.

As we have said before, the connection between conflict and hunger is undeniable. We are pleased that today's resolution definitively resolves any remaining doubt about that link. Today the Security Council has unanimously demanded that parties to armed conflict comply with their obligations under international law and has called on all parties to protect infrastructure critical to providing food to civilians. Today we set forth a clear expectation that parties to conflict should not take steps to perpetuate hunger and the suffering of people.

Perhaps most importantly, the text makes it clear that the Council must be prepared to respond in order to prevent famine caused by conflict. In line with the resolution, we encourage the Secretary-General to be proactive in warning the Council about such conditions so that it can respond. In that regard, we look forward to more regular and continuous reporting on famine conditions within the context of country-specific situations. We have demonstrated here today that we have the will to address conflict-related hunger, and we look forward to working with members of the Council to sustain our focus and attention to this important issue.

Mr. Pronin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the delegations of the Netherlands, Sweden, Kuwait and Côte d'Ivoire for preparing the text of resolution 2417 (2018). We are particularly grateful to our Dutch colleagues for coordinating it and for facilitating its agreement. We have noted our partners' professionalism and constructive approach to problem-solving and finding consensus-based language for a number of delegations' most sensitive issues. We are grateful for their willingness to consider the priorities and concerns of all delegations during the course of a quite complex negotiation process, which has ultimately enabled us to achieve a balanced document supported by all Council members.

We continue to believe that the problem of food security is complex and involves many factors. Armed conflicts are only one of the issues that can have a negative effect on supplying a population with food. We also have to take into account important factors such as fluctuations in the global price of raw materials and manufactured goods, imbalances in global food distribution, the consequences of natural disasters, and climate change. Another important item on that list are unilateral economic restrictions and sanctions. All of those factors, to a lesser or greater extent, make it difficult to ensure food security around the world, something that research by the United Nations specialized humanitarian agencies clearly confirms.

This problem cannot be solved on the political front alone. It extends far beyond the scope of the Security Council. Ensuring that all parties comply with international humanitarian law, which is the point of this resolution, is certainly an important criterion for success, but it is no less important to combine efforts on every front to create opportunities and capacities for local food production, stabilize global commodity markets, liberalize trade, mitigate the effects of natural disasters and refrain from unilateral restrictive measures. It goes without saying that this is a labour-intensive process, but until we take that path, humanitarian needs will only increase. Humanitarian assistance can treat the symptoms, but it cannot cure the disease itself. The continued worrying situation in four countries where the threat of starvation was announced last year only confirms that fact.

Without comprehensive efforts by the international community to create a more just socioeconomic system, the burden on humanitarian agencies, in real terms, is only going to increase. For our part we will continue to provide them with support, and we encourage them in turn to work with full commitment and respect for the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, as the resolution that we have adopted today stipulates.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8268

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8268th meeting
Thursday, 24 May 2018, 10.25 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

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18-15907 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kafando.

Mr. Kafando (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Security Council on recent developments in Burundi.

On 17 May, the people of Burundi voted in favour of a new Constitution. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which announced provisional results on 21 May, of the 4,768,148 people who voted, 73.25 per cent voted in favour of the new Constitution, as opposed to the 19.34 per cent who voted against it. Blank ballots totalled 4.11 per cent, and abstentions 3.28 per cent, with a total voter participation of 96.24 per cent. Once again, I point out that information was provided by CENI. Overall, the referendum took place in a calm environment despite many irregularities and incidents reported by opposition and civil society representatives. CENI itself also reported several incidents that, in its view, were not such to influence the definitive results of the voting.

During my briefing on 25 February (see S/PV.8189), I shared the concerns of the Secretary-General, who had stressed in his report (S/2018/89) the need for the Government to seek the broadest consensus possible on an issue as crucial as amending the Constitution for the future — and the very fate — of Burundi. The Secretary-General underscored in his report the spirit of consensus that prevailed in the negotiations and the adoption of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the 2005 Constitution that resulted from it.

Now that the country is moving towards another important phase in its history, we expect a strong signal from the Burundian authorities in favour of resuming the inter-Burundian dialogue under the aegis of the East African Community. Reviving that dialogue would make it possible for Burundians to discuss together the challenges they face in a climate of mutual trust. It is important to reiterate at this point that it is only through an inclusive dialogue that Burundians will reach sustainable solutions to the current crisis. Without an inclusive dialogue, there is a risk that the opposition's contesting of the results of the referendum will further polarize an already tense political situation, characterised by human rights violations and other abuses, as well as the deterioration of the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation.

In that connection, I would like to draw the attention of Council members to the expulsion of human rights experts deployed in the framework of the implementation of Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, which the Group of African States in Geneva endorsed on 29 September. Their visas were cancelled by the Government on 26 April when they were already in Burundi. I call on the Burundian authorities to facilitate the return of those experts and to renew cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The security situation in Burundi is generally calm, although there have been isolated grenade attacks and there continue to be reports of the discovery of dead bodies, including individuals in military uniforms. The Government should be encouraged to continue its efforts to restore security throughout the national territory. In that regard, I welcome the measures taken against certain forms of violence that were observed before and during the election campaign. The events that occurred on 11 May in the commune of Buganda, in the province of Cibitoke, which we condemned at the United Nations, during which 26 people, including women and children, were killed by unidentified armed men, reminds us that, even though there is general calm at the security level, the environment remains volatile.

The humanitarian situation is undergoing significant developments, but it is still a cause for concern. Many Burundians continue to live in refugee camps, particularly in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I welcome the efforts made by Burundi and Tanzania, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and within the framework of the tripartite agreement, which have already enabled over 13,000 Burundians to voluntarily return to their homes. Those efforts must be continued.

The situation I have just described highlights the relevance of continuing the inclusive dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community. Council members will recall that during the nineteenth summit of the East African Community, held in Uganda on 23 February, Heads of State of the subregion strongly recommended continued dialogue facilitated by former President Benjamin Mkapa and the mediation of President Museveni. The Summit also requested the facilitator to make every effort to convene the fifth session of the dialogue as soon as possible.

In response to the facilitator's invitation of 25 April, the Government of Burundi indicated that it would not take part in any dialogue session before the constitutional referendum was held. In that context, the Conseil national pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi et la restauration de l'état de droit questioned the appropriateness and relevance of a dialogue after a referendum that was supposed to bury the Arusha Agreement. Consultations should be held in the next few days with a view to relaunching the dialogue. I remain convinced that an inclusive dialogue remains the only path to a sustainable political settlement of the political, socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges Burundi has faced since 2015. Among those challenges is the preparation and success of inclusive, credible and transparent elections in 2020. In that regard, the Council could renew its full support to the region, in particular to the mediation led by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and to the facilitator, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, with the support of the African Union and the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

Mr. Lauber: At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council on behalf of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and for the excellent cooperation between the Council and the configuration.

As per established practice, this statement has been approved by the members of the PBC configuration, including the country concerned, Burundi.

Today's briefing gives me an opportunity to inform the Council about my latest visit to Burundi, which took place in late March, and on developments that occurred after my visit. At the end, I will formulate some recommendations regarding international engagement with Burundi. I briefed the PBC Burundi configuration about the outcome of my visit on 16 April.

From 27 to 30 March, I visited Burundi for the sixth time in my capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. The visit allowed me to get a first-hand impression of the situation on the ground, to maintain contact with the Government and other national stakeholders, to advocate for renewed dialogue and cooperation between the Government and its international partners and to identify further avenues for PBC engagement with Burundi. At the time of my visit, the security situation in the country was generally calm.

During my visit, I was received by His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi; the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation; the Minister of Finance, Budget and Privatization; the members of the National Independent Electoral Commission; the President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; leaders of three political parties; the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region; representatives of the private sector; the United Nations country team; the International Committee of the Red Cross; the diplomatic community and a group of local economists and historians.

My visit was an opportunity to learn more about the preparations for the constitutional referendum, which took place on 17 May. The Independent National Electoral Commission explained how it was registering voters both for the referendum and already for the elections of 2020 and how the referendum would be conducted. I underlined in those contacts that the referendum should take place in a democratic and open environment and without any incidents. I also invited the Government to reflect on whether Burundi may require international electoral assistance for the elections of 2020.

On 29 March, I met leaders of three political parties: the ruling party the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, the Union pour le progrès national and Agathon Rwasa. They all agreed that Burundi's political actors should define the path towards the elections of 2020 in a joint road map. Such a road map would include benchmarks aimed at ensuring that the elections will be free, fair, transparent, peaceful and fully inclusive, and engage the participation of all political parties.

The serious economic challenges that Burundi is facing were another key subject of my conversations. Government officials called upon Burundi's partners to focus more on mid- and long-term socioeconomic development than on humanitarian assistance. The Government informed me that it is currently drafting a new national development plan, which might be published before the summer.

Burundi's international partners reiterated their readiness to support Burundi with regard to both socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges. They expressed their wish to be informed about the national development plan as early as possible in order to adapt their development strategies to national priorities. Burundi's international partners and representatives of the private sector referred to certain challenges for economic engagement, including the lack of foreign currency and difficulties in obtaining bank loans.

In my conversation with the President of the Republic, I emphasized that the PBC remains committed to facilitate dialogue between the Government and its international partners. In that regard, I suggested organizing another round of socioeconomic consultations in Bujumbura, which could involve such additional partners as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union and bilateral donors. Burundi's national development plan might serve as a basis for that conversation. The President expressed his interest in the initiative, including the participation of additional partners.

During my stay, high-ranking officials from Burundi, Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a tripartite agreement on the return of Burundian refugees from Tanzania. Priority for repatriation will be given to those 19,148 refugees whose registered intention to return has already been verified by UNHCR.

With regard to the humanitarian response plan for 2018, the Government reiterated its view that the plan contained exaggerated numbers and that there had not been sufficient consultation on it with national authorities. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had launched the plan in February 2018. Its total volume of $141.8 million is currently covered at the rate of only 2.9 per cent. I told the Government and its humanitarian partners that a swift agreement on the humanitarian response plan will allow for the mobilization of additional resources. I also offered the PBC Burundi configuration as a platform to generate broader support for the plan.

When I met the President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I learned about the impressive progress made in this area in recent months. The Commission has already collected more than 45,000 testimonies and worked in 16 of the 18 provinces of Burundi. Among the challenges that the Commission is facing are time pressure, the security of data and the question of accountability.

In my meeting with the President, I recommended an extension of the mandate of the Commission by one year, until the end of 2019, in accordance with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. I indicated that the PBC could help mobilize international technical and financial assistance for reconciliation efforts in Burundi. As in previous meetings, the President insisted on the importance of national reconciliation. He responded positively to the suggestions that the mandate of the Commission be extended and that international expertise be mobilized.

In the past few days, representatives of the United Nations country team and United Nations officials in New York informed me of the following developments that had occurred after the conclusion of my visit.

On 20 April, President Nkurunziza appointed five new Ministers, increasing the Cabinet from 20 to 21 members. Four Ministers were replaced, including Foreign Minister Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, who was succeeded by Ezéchiel Nibigira. The campaign for the constitutional referendum started on 1 May. According to various observers, the environment of the campaign and the referendum was relatively calm. At the same time, I received reports that included allegations of intimidation and repression against opponents of the constitutional changes. On 11 May, as the Special Envoy mentioned before me, 26 people were killed in

a violent attack in the village of Ruhagarika, in north-west Burundi, by unidentified perpetrators, which was an assault that was broadly condemned by national and international actors. The international community continued to follow developments in Burundi attentively and in a constructive manner. In view of the constitutional referendum, the African Union and the European Union, in their capacity as guarantors of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, encouraged Burundi's Government to respect the spirit and the letter of the Agreement.

I also received an update on the implementation of Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 36/2, which had been presented to the HRC on 28 September 2017, by African countries, including Burundi. As mentioned by the Special Envoy, the three human rights experts who had been mandated by the HRC resolution to determine facts and circumstances entered Burundi in February. However, they were unable to conduct their work and left the country after one month. In view of Burundi's support for the HRC resolution and its commitment to cooperation with the three experts, the window of opportunity for the mission remains open. According to United Nations officials, it would be advisable to conduct the mission as soon as possible to allow the three experts to present their report to the Human Rights Council at its next session in June.

Based on my conversations in Burundi and New York, I draw the following conclusions with regard to international engagement with Burundi.

First, the international community should continue to follow developments in Burundi attentively and take all aspects of the current situation into account. In doing so, there is a need for coherence among United Nations actors and the international community, including regional and subregional actors, and for finding common ground with the Government in order to build trust and a better sense of partnership.

Secondly, the mediation efforts of the East African Community, led by President Museveni of Uganda and by former President Mkapa of Tanzania, continue to deserve our full support.

Thirdly, the upcoming national development plan may offer a basis for a renewed conversation between the Government and its international partners. I am therefore planning to organize another round of the socioeconomic dialogue between Burundi and its partners in 2018, in cooperation with the Government of Burundi and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. The involvement of partners such as the IMF, the European Union and bilateral donors that had not participated in the Bujumbura round tables last year seems crucial to me. In my view, such a dialogue session has the potential to foster confidence between Burundi and its partners.

Fourthly, besides mid- and long-term socioeconomic cooperation, the international community should not neglect the immediate humanitarian needs in Burundi. The configuration should continue to encourage cooperation between the Government and its humanitarian partners, with a view to addressing the most urgent needs of the population, in particular in the areas of basic social and health services, food security and protection.

Fifthly, the significant gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement must not be undermined. One of the advantages of a road map to 2020 among political actors would be that it could yield a broadly shared understanding of how the gains of Arusha can be preserved, especially in view of the elections of 2020.

Sixthly, the international community should continue to support national reconciliation efforts and follow the ongoing reconciliation process in Burundi attentively.

The President: I thank Mr. Lauber for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his informative briefing and for his commitment. I am also grateful to my Swiss colleague, Mr. Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his very useful briefing.

France takes note of the results of the referendum. Although the elections were held in relative calm, as has been said, we deplore the fact that the campaign took place in a climate clouded by intimidation and various threats of violence against those opposed to constitutional reform. The revision of the Constitution introduces amendments that run counter to the Arusha Accords. Indeed, if care is not taken, it may begin to unravel the Accords, which have been the backbone of a decade of peace in Burundi. The institutionalized

system of power-sharing between the various elements of the Burundian community has been put in doubt, and the mechanisms for protecting the Tutsi minority have either been weakened or are disappearing. In our view, this reform will not help to resolve the crisis that the country has been mired in since 2015.

We therefore remain very concerned about the political impasse and the security situation in Burundi. Faced with the impossibility of dialogue and a total shutdown of the political arena, the most radical opposition factions have been tempted to resort to armed struggle. In the ruling party, the Imbonerakure militias are playing an increasingly significant part in intimidating and repressing any dissenting voices and are difficult to control. The situation is therefore at risk of deteriorating and the status quo is not sustainable in the long term. The Ruhagarika massacre of 11 May, in which 27 civilians were murdered, is yet another new and tragic illustration of that.

We must break out of the current vicious circle. The dialogue facilitated by the East African Community has so far failed, mainly due to obstruction by the Burundian authorities. However, the priority must remain to launch a genuine inclusive national dialogue, without conditions or exclusions, that gives voice to the aspirations of every element of Burundian society. That priority is inseparable from the issue of respect for human rights, which is also worrying. An inclusive dialogue can be possible only if the Government makes the right moves, including enabling the opposition, the media and civil society to play their part without being undermined. We also expect robust demonstrations of regional support to ensure that this dialogue can truly take place.

In this difficult context, we call on all Burundian parties to return to the spirit of consensus that led to the conclusion of the Arusha Accords and on their guarantors to mobilize in the quest for a political solution to the crisis. The necessary regional leadership for the situation in Burundi must accompanied by close monitoring on the part of the Council. In Burundi's very volatile situation, the Arusha Accords are now more than ever the compass that must guide the efforts of the Burundian parties and the international community in the service of Burundi and its stability.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Michel Kafando and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their illuminating briefings on the situation. We firmly believe that respect for the constitutional order of every country defines and sustains modern States today and thereby guarantees their stability and plurality.

The results of Burundi's constitutional referendum of 17 May, with the participation of 26 political parties, reaffirm the will of the people and define the determination of the Burundian authorities and the majority of the Burundian population to advance towards an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue and political stability. The fact that the referendum was held without major incident is testament to the overall improvement in the country's situation.

In that connection, we call on all parties to abstain from taking actions that could be counterproductive. We believe that the provisional results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission on Monday, 21 May, which show a 73.26 per cent vote in favour of the new Constitution of Burundi and a mere 18 per cent against, with a high participation rate, represent a solid foundation for elections to be held in 2020. We believes that those results express the will of the people and that this decision lies exclusively within the purview of Burundi's national sovereignty. That is to say, we see this as an internal Burundian issue and a decision that will ensure the country's long-term stability. Similar processes have been carried out in other countries without major problems. In that regard, we believe that all necessary precautions and preventive measures should be taken to optimize the subsequent processes. The Council should continue to promote a spirit of impartiality and negotiated settlement by fostering and calling for inter-Burundian dialogue.

Equatorial Guinea has always believed in and supported the mediation efforts of all international, regional and subregional organizations together with those of Burundi's national political actors. That is the only way to ensure a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Burundi. That political process must be based on respect for democratic principles and values and the promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms. In that regard, we call on all Burundi's political actors to continue to make efforts to establish and build trust in order to advance a comprehensive, frank and transparent national dialogue that can bring national unity and cohesion. In that effort, we believe that the Government of Burundi must assume a leadership role

and take appropriate measures to maintain the country's unity and build a national reconciliation process. All such efforts should have the backing of the Council and the international community.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): The Kingdom of the Netherlands thanks Special Envoy Kafando and Ambassador Lauber for their illuminating briefings. The Netherlands has been closely following the political climate in Burundi, since we are very concerned about the consequences of the potential political tensions for the population of Burundi and, in particular, for the security situation. I would like to draw the Council's attention to three aspects: first, the incidents related to the referendum; secondly, the ongoing need for inter-Burundian dialogue; and thirdly, the importance of the Arusha Accords.

Despite the absence of serious violence, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has taken note of the various incidents reported during the elections, such as denying accredited opposition observers access to polling stations or arresting them, and intimidating Burundian citizens in and around polling stations, including through the presence of members of the ruling party's youth league at some polling stations. We condemn such acts around the referendum process, which may have harmed a climate conducive to free choice. We expect the Burundian Government to ensure that any action based on the referendum, including the process of formalizing constitutional amendments, will be conducted on the basis of a broad consensus on the part of all stakeholders and in line with the relevant provisions of the current Constitution.

Despite the current impasse, the Netherlands continues to give its full support to the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community. A political solution developed through constructive and inclusive dialogue remains the most sustainable and viable way out of the political crisis in the country. We call on the Burundian Government to allow the political arena to be opened up in the post-referendum phase by ensuring circumstances that are more conducive to peaceful dialogue and contributing to positive efforts aimed at helping Burundi and its partners combat the country's persistent poverty. The Kingdom of the Netherlands fears that the risk of violence in Burundi continues. In that regard, we condemn the attack in Cibitoke province that claimed the lives of 24 civilians, including 11 children. We call on all stakeholders to refrain from violence and fully respect human rights.

The Arusha Accords, signed in 2000 after three decades of conflict, remain the cornerstone of stability in Burundi. All dialogue, political reform and action undertaken in Burundi should be based on the principles and spirit of the solid foundations laid by Presidents Nyerere and Mandela. They created a system of constitutional provisions to discourage the concentration of power in a single party or group and to form a unified army. We fear that the proposed constitutional amendments will undermine the achievements of the Accords. We recognize and stress the importance and primary responsibility of the guarantors of the Arusha Accords in safeguarding the spirit that reigned at their adoption.

In conclusion, the Netherlands remains committed to the development and stability of the people of Burundi, while recognizing that only Burundi's stakeholders have the power to bring about lasting peace. We fully support the East African Community and the guarantors of the Arusha Accords in their efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the current crisis.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful for the briefings delivered by Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Bolivia appreciates and supports the Special Envoy's efforts to continue the inter-Burundian dialogue in an inclusive environment. We also appreciate the efforts to facilitate that goal led by the former President of Tanzania, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, and the President of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Museveni, in accordance with the Arusha Accords, which must remain the cornerstone of that process. We reiterate that dialogue and respect for the Accords are key to enabling Burundi's emergence from its crisis. In that regard, and in view of the fact that Burundi presents no threat to international peace and security, since its situation remains stable, we believe that the road map proposed by Mr. Mkapa should be implemented in order to reach a consensus and create the conditions necessary for a peaceful environment for the next elections, to be held in 2020.

The Security Council, and the international community in general, must act on a basis of respect for Burundi's sovereignty, independence and territorial

integrity. In that regard, we consider that Burundi's referendum and constitutional reform are both internal issues that must be consolidated by Burundians for Burundians. We must take into account the progress made in the negotiations in the inter-Burundian dialogue. We should not forget that there is consensus on several points. It is important to analyse those where there is still a lack of agreement, and the international community should support that dialogue constructively with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement. Burundi's contribution to peace and security through its troop contributions, which demonstrate its institutional capacity, should also be taken into account.

The international community should support Burundi in strengthening its capacities and assisting it with its socioeconomic development and the humanitarian challenges it is facing. In that regard, we commend the tripartite agreement signed by Burundi, Tanzania and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of refugees to Burundi from Tanzania, which prioritized the repatriation of 19,148 refugees. We also encourage the international community to continue funding the humanitarian response programme in Burundi.

In order to overcome these challenges, we need to create an environment of trust, and that means lifting the unilateral sanctions that have negative effects on the lives of vulnerable groups such as women and children and are detrimental to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. We should point out here that such unilateral actions are illegal according to the Charter of the United Nations.

We acknowledge the efforts and work of the East African Community (EAC), the African Union Special Envoy, the Chair of the Burundi configuration and the United Nations country team in Burundi. We encourage them to continue their work and to coordinate their efforts to achieve better cooperation in order to continue supporting the mediation under the auspices of the EAC, which should continue to lead that process.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their insightful briefings and significant contribution to our deliberations today.

At the outset, we would like to express our deep condolences to the people and the Government of Burundi for the barbaric terrorist attack that took place on 11 May in the north-western province of Cibitoke in Burundi, resulting in the deaths of 26 civilians. We offer our sympathies to the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery. We urge the Government to undertake a thorough investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice. We therefore support the recommendations we heard today from our briefers, and would like to make some observations for the Council's consideration.

First, on the political front, we take note of the 17 May nationwide referendum on amending the Constitution. We hope that the results of that critical event reflect the will of the Burundian people, and will have no negative impact on the country's political and security situation. We reiterate our concern about the minimal progress made in developing the inter-Burundian dialogue. We call on all political actors to engage in meaningful communication, which should include negotiations for the road map aimed at charting a viable path towards the holding of peaceful, free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections in 2020.

That nationally owned process should be held in an environment conducive to dialogue, confidence and nationwide consensus, engaging all key political stakeholders with the aim of ensuring durable peace. We emphasize the importance of the continued efforts of the African Union and the East African Community in the mediation process. We therefore urge the leadership of the subregion and the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement to redouble their efforts in revitalizing political interaction, while engaging all parties. In that regard, we support the personal involvement and commitment of the facilitator, former President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando. We hope that the next round of the inter-Burundian dialogue will be more inclusive and productive, thereby paving the way for the restoration of peace, security and long-term stability in Burundi.

We also note the importance of all political sides implementing the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. We see that as the only key to a peaceful resolution of the country's political crisis. We also emphasize the importance of respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all its citizens.

Secondly, on the humanitarian track, with nearly 180,000 internally displaced persons and 430,000 refugees, together with 3.6 million people in need

of assistance, the current humanitarian situation in Burundi must be urgently addressed. The repatriation of refugees must be voluntary and in accordance with the principles of respect and dignity set forth in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. We commend the signing of the tripartite agreement between representatives of Burundi and Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of additional Burundian refugees from Tanzania.

Thirdly, on the development track, we note the efforts of the Government of Burundi to stabilize the economic situation in the country, including by drafting the national development plan, which will be a significant step forward. International support is therefore critical to assisting the nation to overcome existing economic challenges. That platform could become the basis for confidence-building between Burundi and its partners.

Lastly, we commend the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on playing such a significant coordinating role and for facilitating dialogue between the Government of Burundi and the international community.

Ms. French (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Kafando for his briefing. We would also like to thank Ambassador Lauber for his briefing and tireless efforts with the Peacebuilding Commission.

Arbitrary arrests, a lack of transparency, the suspension of media outlets and attempts to put pressure on voters marred Burundi's 17 May referendum process, thereby undermining confidence in its reported outcome. The results leave us concerned that Burundi is moving closer to one-party rule. The referendum took place against the backdrop of stalled progress in the East African Community-led dialogue, continuing repression and an unstable political situation. The referendum further aggravates ongoing acute political tensions, which have destabilizing effects on Burundi and the wider region.

Although the Government allowed vigorous campaigning by the opposition during the designated two-week campaign period, numerous cases of harassment and repression against referendum opponents in the months preceding the voting contributed to a climate of fear and intimidation, resulting in an environment that did not allow for a credible referendum. The absence of independent observers also undermines confidence in the reported result. We also condemn reports of armed groups killing 26 innocent civilians in the days leading up to the referendum. The climate of violence, fear and repression underscores the need for serious dialogue to advance peace.

Restrictions on media worsened in advance of the referendum, further undermining the credibility of the process. We condemn the Government's decision to suspend the broadcasts of Voice of America and the British Broadcasting Corporation during that particularly volatile time. That decision, along with other media restrictions, arbitrary arrests and harsh sentences for human rights defenders, undermines basic democratic norms and signals continuing troubling limitations on civic and political space in Burundi.

We remain concerned that the Government will interpret the revised Constitution as resetting presidential term limits, and that other amendments seek to consolidate the President's power, place restrictions on independent candidates and coalitions of candidates and run counter to the power-sharing principles enshrined in the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Such amendments will have long-term impacts on Burundi's governance and institutions.

We recall the ruling party's commitment under the Pretoria Protocol to respect the principles of the Arusha Agreement, including respect for term limits, and expect it to abide by them. The United States is closely tracking the trend of leaders extending their rule by eliminating or extending term limits. We note from experience that, when whole generations of people are denied democracy and fundamental freedoms, instability and insecurity are often the result. It appears that Burundi is following that undemocratic trend, which we fear will lay the foundation for continued instability and political tensions for years to come.

The United States supported and was present at the signing of the Arusha Agreement, which brought an end to years of tragic civil war in Burundi. We believe that parties must continue to respect it in the interests of Burundians and the wider region.

The Government of Burundi must take clear steps to reopen the political space for members of the opposition, independent media and civil society and to engage in inclusive dialogue with Burundian political stakeholders. It is critical that the Government of Burundi participate in good faith in the next session

of the inter-Burundian dialogue. We urge the region to intensify its engagement on Burundi in the post-referendum period to press for a durable political solution to Burundi's political crisis, a reopening of political space and an end to human rights abuses and violations.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would very much like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Kafando, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber for their very useful briefings today. I would like to underscore that we fully support their efforts to achieve durable peace and sustainable development in Burundi.

Today's briefings underlined the precarious nature of the current political, economic and humanitarian situation in the country and continued reports of grave human rights violations and abuses. The attack on 11 May, which many have mentioned, killed 26 people in Ruhagarika and further demonstrates that the security situation remains fragile.

The referendum on 17 May was held against that backdrop. We note that the Government allowed some campaigning during the campaign period. However, reports of an overall climate of intimidation, including the closure of certain media outlets in the lead-up to the referendum, demonstrate that conditions for reconciliation and long-lasting political peace and stability are still largely absent. The spirit and key provisions of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi therefore remains relevant and central. They constitute a pillar for peace and stability in Burundi and the entire region. An inclusive political resolution of the current conflict must be found through dialogue. A lack thereof will negatively affect upcoming elections in 2020 and the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation. We fully support greater involvement in East African Community-led mediation efforts under President Museveni and former President Mkapa. We expect the Government to commit fully to the inter-Burundian dialogue.

The efforts of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) are equally important. The PBC remains a unique platform for discussing the situation in the country with Burundi. We strongly support Ambassador Lauber's approach and efforts and hope that the dialogue on socioeconomic issues will contribute to increased confidence between Burundi and its partners. In the short term, addressing the humanitarian situation in Burundi is of paramount importance. Urgent action is needed to alleviate immediate suffering rooted in issues such as food insecurity and protection challenges.

Lastly, continued reports of grave human rights violations and abuses in Burundi remain deeply worrisome. Sweden calls on Burundian authorities to ensure that the three human rights experts mandated by the Human Rights Council can carry out their work in the country unhindered. In addition, we urge Burundi to swiftly agree on a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as with the African Union, with regard to its human rights and military observers. Upholding and respecting human rights and ensuring accountability are critical, nurture trust, strengthen dialogue and reconciliation — and ultimately contribute to durable peace.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando for the quality of his briefing on the sociopolitical situation in Burundi. I also thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, whose recent mission to Burundi has enabled us to follow developments on the ground.

I will focus on the referendum held on 17 May and the outlook for the political process in Burundi. On 17 May, Burundian voters voted in favour of the constitutional reform proposed by the Burundian authorities. Côte d'Ivoire takes note of the provisional results of the referendum, which unquestionably remains a prerogative of the Burundian authorities. However, we regret the lack of consultation with the various sectors of Burundian society, which not only risks widening the split between the ruling coalition and the opposition but may also further undermine the process of national reconciliation in Burundi. Côte d'Ivoire therefore urges the Burundian authorities, in the aftermath of the referendum, to work to create a peaceful sociopolitical climate that will foster a resumption of political dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Accords. The Accords have been the main pillar of peace and stability for more than a decade and brought an end to the country's civil war by establishing a system in which power is shared by Burundi's various ethnic groups.

The stalemate in the inter-Burundian political dialogue is of concern to the entire international community. The fact is that more than six months after the last session of the inter-Burundian dialogue,

conducted in Uganda under the auspices of the East African Community, there has been no significant progress in the political process despite the efforts of the facilitator, Mr. Mkapa. Côte d'Ivoire urges Burundi's stakeholders to resume their dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Accords. We urge them to reject preconditions and unilateral actions in order to create the conditions necessary for a successful resolution of the crisis, through a credible political process leading to democratic and inclusive elections in 2020.

In conclusion, my delegation encourages the East African Community and the mediator and facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue to work for a resumption of the political dialogue. We call on the international community to support all regional and subregional initiatives to that end. We support Special Envoy Kafando and reiterate our readiness to support his continued efforts to help end the crisis in Burundi.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and the briefings of Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. We fully support their efforts.

Peru takes note of the results of the referendum, but regrets that it was organized without independent observers amid complaints of intimidation of the opposition and restrictions on the freedom of the press. We are particularly concerned about the fact that the constitutional amendments promoted by the Government of Burundi and approved in a disputed referendum may undermine important commitments made in the Arusha Accords, which are recognized and supported by the Security Council, designed to safeguard the rights of the Burundian minorities and affecting the delicate governmental balance achieved between the country's various communities after a tragic civil war. In that regard, we should encourage the authorities of Burundi to protect the entire population, including minorities, and to put an end to the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms that unfortunately continue. We also want to underline the need to reject hate speech, to keep all parties committed to the delicate balance that has maintained peace and stability in Burundi for more than a decade, and to prevent any recurrence of acts of violence, especially those that have taken place since 2015.

In the current circumstances, we consider it urgent to ensure that the process of inter-Burundian dialogue can move forward and that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights can resume its activities in Burundi.

Finally, we believe it is important to ensure that the Council follows developments in the country carefully, and that regional organizations and neighbouring countries can also follow developments there more closely and support the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I would first like to thank Mr. Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, for his very clear and frank briefing, which comes at an important time for Burundi, in the wake the referendum. I should also like to thank Ambassador Lauber, for his thoughtful briefing, particularly the six recommendations he made for international community engagement. I am happy to say that we support all of those very clear and useful recommendations.

The United Kingdom would like to join the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United States, France and other speakers today in expressing our concern about the violence seen in the run-up to the referendum. Human Rights Watch has reported that at least 15 people opposing the referendum have been killed, while six have been raped and eight abducted. We remain very concerned about the restrictions on the political space and the media in the period leading up to the referendum. Regrettably, the preparations for the referendum and the vote itself were held in a climate of intimidation and repression, with a lack of public information on the proposed reforms. We heard today from Special Envoy Kafando about reports of many irregularities by the opposition and from civil society. Such actions only reduce the confidence that the results of the referendum represent the will of the electorate.

We are of the view, in strong agreement with Special Envoy Kafondo, that the Government of Burundi must ensure that the spirit of the Arusha Accords is respected when any constitutional reform is implemented. The current crisis in Burundi can be resolved only by continuing an inclusive dialogue that preserves the Accords. We hope that the implementation of the constitutional amendments will not have any impact on the previous agreements, particularly with regard to ethnic quotas and the representation of women in

the Government. The United Kingdom calls on the African Union and the other guarantors of the Arusha Accords to pay careful attention to preserving them during any implementation of constitutional changes in Burundi. We encourage and support the African Union in its efforts to ensure that the spirit of the Accords is adhered to.

As others have already said today, we remain extremely concerned about the human rights situation in Burundi. We note with concern the points made by the Special Envoy about the expulsion of human rights experts, and we join his call to the Burundian authorities to facilitate their return and cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We continue to call on the Government to implement the two resolutions adopted at the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/36/2 and A/HRC/36/19). We also urge the Government to make progress on the criteria set by the European Union (EU) that would pave the way for a resumption of EU financial assistance to Burundi.

What we have heard today indicates that there is little prospect of an early end to the political crisis or improvement in the humanitarian situation in Burundi. The current situation is unsustainable. We often talk in this Chamber about the importance of conflict prevention. The risks in Burundi are huge, and the case for preventive diplomacy is overwhelming. We therefore join the Peacebuilding Commission's call to the international community to pay close attention to the situation in Burundi, and we strongly encourage the Burundian Government, the East African Community and the African Union to vigorously pursue inclusive dialogue and preserve the gains of the Arusha Accords, which is the only way to ensure peace and security in the country.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his briefing on the constitutional referendum held in Burundi and the development of the situation there. We have taken note of the report of Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). We welcome the configuration's balanced and equidistant approach to the issue of a Burundi-owned settlement, which has made it one of the most trustworthy channels for communication with Bujumbura. We support the PBC's efforts to revitalize cooperation with Burundians by discussing issues related to the country's socioeconomic development and re-establishing donor confidence.

The Russian Federation continues to be of the view that the referendum on 17 May on amending the Constitution is a strictly internal affair for Burundi. As we know, the changes were initiated by the National Commission for the Inter-Burundi Dialogue, which included representatives of various sectors of society, encompassing members of all the parties represented in Parliament, including the opposition, as well as non-parliamentary political associations, the clergy and civil society. The Commission's high level of representativeness, even during the referendum's preparatory stages, has meant that we can say that the people supported the idea of holding the referendum. The results showed an impressive — even unheard-of, among African countries — turnout of 96.24 per cent, with an overwhelming majority of voters — 73.26 per cent — supporting the constitutional amendments. We believe that the referendum took place in calm circumstances and was preceded by a democratic and transparent campaign, despite some problems.

We would like to draw our colleagues' attention to the fact that the alarmist predictions made in this Chamber only a few weeks ago were not justified. On the contrary, in general we see positive momentum in the way the situation in the country is developing. We are not idealizing it, but we also see no reason to get worked up about it, as some of our colleagues have done today. That could send those who do not enjoy support in Burundian society the wrong message about the Security Council's attitude to the situation there.

The reality of the security situation in Burundi is surely testified to by the fact that the seventy-second session of the African Inter-Parliamentary Union will be held in Bujumbura from 22 to 23 May. We urge that be taken into consideration, including when considering the rationale for keeping the Burundian dossier on the Security Council's already overburdened agenda. Ultimately, there are always problems in any country. However, it is important to ensure that the Council considers only those issues that represent a threat to international and regional peace and security. We do not believe that the Council should get embroiled in discussing countries' domestic political situations, usurping the role of other United Nations structures in Geneva, giving someone or other some advice or other on State structure and lecturing them on democracy

and how people should live. Today, unfortunately, we had a lot of people wanting to tell an independent Government what to do. Let us respect ourselves and others. Exercises such as these definitely do nothing to enhance the Security Council's authority in the eyes of African Governments.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Mr. Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their briefings. We appreciate their efforts to promote peace and stability in Burundi and the region.

The current situation in Burundi is generally stable. The Government has worked actively to preserve national peace and stability and promote economic and social development. It has formulated an national development plan, signed an agreement with Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of refugees and worked with neighbouring countries to encourage the voluntary return of Burundian refugees to their homes. China welcomes those developments. Burundi is an important country in the Great Lakes region, and its stability and development contribute to wider peace and stability in the region. The international community should continue to provide it with constructive assistance. China would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, there must be proper respect for Burundi's national ownership, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. China notes that the Independent National Electoral Commission recently announced the results of the constitutional referendum, with broad participation and nearly three quarters of the population voting in its favour, in a full demonstration of the ability of Burundi's Government and people to properly address relevant issues. The international community should consider the situation in Burundi comprehensively and objectively, respect the country's ownership in handling its affairs and provide constructive assistance with a view to preserving peace and development in the region.

Secondly, there must be continued support for Burundi's political process. We appreciate the positive efforts by regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in exercising their good offices with regard to the issue of Burundi. We support the EAC in taking the lead in that regard.

Thirdly, our priority should be increasing humanitarian assistance to Burundi and supporting its economic and social development. Burundi continues to face humanitarian challenges, owing to a relatively large gap in funding for humanitarian assistance. We hope that international partners will honour their commitments in a timely manner and provide assistance. We call on the relevant international agencies and organizations to resume their economic cooperation and development assistance to the country as soon as possible. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy and the PBC are important bridges for communication between Burundi and the international community. We hope that they will make use of their respective advantages and enhance their communication in cooperation with the Burundian Government. China is ready to continue to support their work.

China has consistently supported Burundi in its peace process and assisted it in its national reconstruction to the best of its ability. We are ready to continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and sustainable development in Burundi.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank Special Envoy Michel Kafando for his briefing on the political situation in Burundi. We have always valued the contribution of the Special Envoy. We also commend Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and appreciate his briefing. It once again demonstrated how useful the work of the PBC is to the Security Council, and how, when it is handled in an effective manner, as Ambassador Lauber has done, the advisory capacity of the PBC is critical to making the Council more effective and, I might add, wiser.

We were able to closely follow the constitutional referendum, which took place on 17 May. We note the generally calm environment during the campaign and the conduct of the referendum, despite reports about allegations of intimidation and repression against opponents of the constitutional changes, which were referred to us both by the Special Envoy and by the Chair of the Burundi configuration. We believe any grievance with regard to the process of the referendum and its

outcome should be addressed through the established legal mechanisms in a more transparent manner.

We are also encouraged to note that the security situation in Burundi still continues to be stable. As the country prepares to embrace the outcome of the referendum, the pressing issue now is how to avoid any erosion in the relatively calm situation that prevails now.

As we have been repeatedly stating, the political impasse in the country can be addressed only through peaceful, inclusive and consensual dialogue. The lack of progress in that regard in the mediation led by the East African Community (EAC)has been of a matter of serious concern. Hence, the rapid re-launching of genuine and inclusive dialogue, under :he auspices of the EAC and with the support of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations on the basis of the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the Constitution of Burundi, is all the more urgent to ensure lasting peace and stability, as well as a better future for Burundi.

We believe, as was also stressed by Ambassador Lauber, that strong coordination and coherence among the EAC, the African Union and the United Nations is key to making progress on the peace process. We urge the Government of Burundi to recommit itself to participating in the dialogue process. All the stakeholders in the crisis in Burundi should also cooperate fully with the facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue and participate in that process in good faith.

The engagement between the international community and the Government of Burundi has to be based on a realistic strategy aimed at supporting strong institutions and creating a conducive climate in which political differences can be addressed without backsliding into the violence of the past. In that regard, the Council should explore new avenues for re-engagement with Burundi in order to address the political impasse. While we welcome and encourage the work of the Chair of the Burundi configuration in serving as a bridge for dialogue between Burundi and the international community, we also recommend exploring discreet diplomacy, in close coordination with the AU and the EAC, to engage the Burundian Government. The cultivation of trust in all of that is critical.

As the political impasse coupled with the continued reduction of international financial assistance has put huge socioeconomic pressure on Burundi, we believe that alleviating the socioeconomic difficulties of the population, as well as addressing the humanitarian situation, should also be an integral part of the re-engagement. Ambassador Lauber's proposals made a while ago are worth looking at carefully and seriously.

On the side of the Government of Burundi, too, we believe that it is important for there to be open-minded engagement with the international community to explain the constitutional reform process and its outcome, the plan for the election in 2020, as well as the commitments to the spirit of the Arusha Agreement.

The Government might also look seriously at the situation with regard to the three human rights experts, mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, which was presented on 28 September 2017 by African countries, including Burundi, in Geneva, and gather the information so that it would be able to garner the necessary assistance to address the capacity gap critically needed in the area.

In conclusion, sustainable peace can be achieved only through a comprehensive solution on the basis of the Arusha Agreements and the Constitution of Burundi. Now that the referendum has passed, we can only hope that there will be readiness on the part of all the relevant stakeholders for frank and genuine dialogue to chart the best way forward.

Burundi is a country that continues to contribute in a significant manner to the peace and security of Somalia, which has huge significance for peace in the Horn of Africa and Africa in general. It is also from that perspective that we look at the need for improved relations between Burundi and the international community. It is our hope that Ambassador Lauber will continue with the very encouraging approach he has adopted and the process he has embarked upon.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando and the Permanent Representative of Switzerland, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their valuable briefings.

We have followed with interest the efforts made by the Government of Burundi to conclude the referendum on the Constitution, which was held on 17 May 2018, with the participation of the majority of the political parties. According to the preliminary results announced nationally by the Independent National Electoral Commission, 73.26 per cent of voters voted in favour

of the constitutional changes. That is a very high turn out. Indeed, it reflects the ambitions of the Burundian people, despite the relative calm prevailing in Burundi at the time. We hope the presidential elections in 2020 will be conducted in the same environment of calm.

In accordance with that milestone reached in Burundi, we urge the Government to move beyond the present stage and make future plans to promote the well-being of the people of Burundi, whose security and livelihoods have suffered as a result of the political instability over the past two years. We stress the importance of holding an inclusive national dialogue without preconditions in order to allow for the expression of the aspirations of all Burundian people.

In that vein, we highly appreciate the concerted effort made by President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni, the mediator of the political dialogue led by the East African Community (EAC), and Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, its facilitator. We hope that the dialogue will be successful and reach consensus solutions that will ensure the political stability of Burundi. We reaffirm the need for the Government of Burundi to engage with regional and international organizations, namely, the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the EAC, to ensure the desired stability.

We have followed with interest all of the efforts made last year to bring the parties to the conflict in Burundi to the negotiating table in Arusha. Unfortunately, those efforts have not been successful. Therefore, we call for the continuation of such efforts because we believe that no tangible progress in the political process between the opposition and the Government of Burundi can be achieved unless all parties are brought to the same negotiating table to reach consensus and put an end to political polarization and establish the rules for law and security. The only way to achieve such consensus is for all parties to comply with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, which was signed in Tanzania in 2000.

In conclusion. I would like to commend the voluntary return of the Burundian refugees following the tripartite agreement signed among the Government of Burundi and the Government of Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Burundian authorities must redouble their efforts to ensure the refugees' reintegration in society and establish an environment that is conducive to that objective.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their comprehensive briefings.

The situation in Burundi has to be seen in the wider regional context of the Great Lakes region. It risks deepening a humanitarian and refugee crisis in Burundi and its neighbourhood. While thanking international and regional mediators for the efforts so far, we encourage the East African Community and the African Union to increase their commitment to breaking the political impasse and enhancing coordination of their steps in that regard.

We recognize the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, with its provisions on the need for broad political consensus and avoiding concentrating power in a single institution or unit as the main instrument for peace and stability in Burundi and in the region. Poland would like to emphasize the particular role the leaders of neighbouring countries and the Arusha Agreement guarantors have to play in overcoming the causes generating instability in the region.

Poland has concerns about the situation in Burundi, both in the pre-referendum period and in the tense situation after the voting. We are worried about the deterioration of human rights and limitations on political space for members of the opposition, independent media and civil society. We hope that the inter-Burundian dialogue will be continued, as only an inclusive political dialogue can ensure a sustainable and widely acceptable solution.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you personally and your country, Poland, on your assumption of the rotating presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. You can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation for the remaining days of your mandate. Through you, I would also like to thank the other members of the Council that have always supported respect for the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations in

addressiing the situation in Burundi — although some delegations remain imprisoned or brainwashed in their 2015 rhetoric without moving in parallel with the evolving situation in the country. I would also like to thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, my colleague from Switzerland, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his positive and growing role in the peacebuilding process in my country, Burundi. I cannot help but thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michel Kafando, for his briefing to the Council this morning.

The purpose of my statement is to share with the Security Council the latest developments in Burundi since the Council's previous briefing, three months ago here in the Chamber, on the situation in my country (see S/PV.8189).

On the political front, on 17 May, Burundi concluded its constitutional referendum with resounding success. According to the provisional national results announced on Monday, 21 May by the Independent National Electoral Commission, the "yes" to Burundi's new Constitution won by a large margin, with 73.26 per cent of the vote, as well as with a record participation rate of 96.24 per cent. Through the referendum, the Burundian people demonstrated to the international community their political maturity and their capacity to organize free, transparent and peaceful democratic elections, and especially with a budget made up entirely of Burundian funds.

The referendum and the two-week campaign preceding it took place in very good conditions throughout the country and across the diaspora. No major incidents were reported to the Electoral Commission during the entire process up to election day. The campaign was very lively, pluralistic, colourful and inclusive. In total, in addition to the ruling party, 25 political parties and opposition coalitions participated in a peaceful election campaign throughout the country, with a high sense of political tolerance between those in favour of the "yes" side and those in favour of the "no" side as to the revised Constitution.

By voting 73.26 per cent in favour of the new Constitution with such record participation, the Burundian people once again reaffirmed their sovereignty, unity in diversity, social cohesion, political tolerance, patriotism, bravery and will to definitively take ownership of their country's political, economic and cultural governance. The date of 17 May 2018 will remain an unforgettable red-letter day in Burundi's political history.

My delegation recalls in passing that the constitutional reform that was just successfully completed was the result of broad consultations conducted over more than a year with the Burundian population in all its diversity. That was an exercise aimed at the country's long-term stability, in particular by ending the transitional period under the current 2005 Constitution.

At the substantive level, the new Constitution fully respects the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, to which the Government attaches great importance. All the substantive articles — I repeat, all the substantive articles — of the Arusha Agreement guaranteeing democratic principles, sovereignty, social cohesion, political stability, national unity, social justice, the protection of minorities, ethnic and gender quotas in institutions, term limits and the protection of human rights have been maintained or even strengthened. What is being said about supposed non-respect for the Arusha Agreement is manipulation of opinion and the will of certain outside actors to destabilize our country. That behaviour, which has manifested itself since 2015, is not dead and buried. Of that we are very aware. The people of Burundi remain very vigilant so as to safeguard their unity and cohesion. The degree of patriotism that has developed among Burundians since 2015 will leave no cracks for any attempt from abroad to destabilize the country to exploit it.

So far, only one political actor, the leader of an independent coalition called Amizero y'Abarundi, out of the 26 parties that took part in the elections, has contested, without convincing anyone, the outcome of the referendum. That was done even before the provisional official results were published by the competent body, the Independent National Electoral Commission. It should be recalled that that political actor has never recognized any electoral results since he entered politics. His denial of the results is a repeat offence in that he has denied the results of all the elections in which he has participated. In the event that that recidivist actor does not withdraw his groundless challenge, wisdom and the rule of law quite naturally oblige him to comply with the electoral code by using the competent legal mechanisms for litigating electoral disputes.

A few delegations in the Chamber today made statements taking shots at the recently concluded referendum process. They are the same delegations that put forward alarmist scenarios before the referendum, which nevertheless, fortunately, took place under very good conditions. I would say to those delegations that the referendum is a victim of its own success.

With regard to media coverage of the referendum, my delegation commends the outstanding synergy between the public and private media. As soon as polling stations opened, 15 public and private radio stations provided live coverage of the elections in real time in the four most widely spoken languages in Burundi. That ongoing media presence reinforced the degree of transparency of the voting, as did the major presence of the political representatives of each party and political coalition in all polling stations — with the right to confirm the results of the voting operations after counting the votes.

Speaking of the media, I would note that Burundi was recently unfairly and prematurely condemned by some of its partners for having temporarily suspended the broadcasting of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Voice of America for flagrant violations of journalism standards. After a rigorous investigation, the BBC World Service, in its 11 May letter addressed to the President of Burundi's National Communication Council, acknowledged that journalists involved in arranging and conducting an interview with a guest who had ties to the Burundian radical opposition had acted in violation of the professional ethics and strict rules of the BBC.

After the admission of the facts, the management of the BBC presented its official apology to the National Communication Council in its 11 May letter. In the same letter, the BBC undertook to spare no effort to ensure that such breaches of journalistic ethics would not recur in future. The National Council of Communication of welcomed the apology of the BBC and awaits the follow-up to the right of reply that BBC radio promised the Government of Burundi to quickly close this issue in a constructive spirit. My delegation encourages the Voice of America, which recognized in its 18 May letter that it had broadcast biased information on Burundi, to do the same.

With regard to dialogue as a means of peacebuilding and the peaceful resolution of political disputes, Burundi reiterates its commitment to peacebuilding, unity, stability, social cohesion, national harmony, the rule of law and the ongoing democratic order through sustained dialogue.

With regard to the security situation, Burundi remains firmly committed to peace, stability and national reconciliation. The security situation is generally stable throughout Burundi. The successful holding of a free, transparent, democratic and peaceful constitutional referendum and the organization, from 22 to 23 May, of the seventy-second session of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union in Bujumbura bear witness to that. At the end of its session, the African Parliamentary Union welcomed the positive developments in the political, security and social situation in Burundi. It believes that the normalization of the general situation in the country should push our European Union partners to normalize their relations with Burundi by lifting the economic sanctions, which are unfairly causing difficulties for the Burundian people. The African Parliamentary Union also regrets the poor understanding of the political, social and security situation in Burundi following disinformation campaigns that currently permeate the international community. During his statement to the press, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union stated, among other things, that "what is being said about Burundi and what we see on the ground is different". He said that what they had found was "a viable and peaceful Burundi — a country that needs support in its reconciliation and development efforts".

With regard to bilateral cooperation with our partners, Burundi reiterates its commitment to strengthening its mutually beneficial friendly and cooperative relations with both traditional and non-traditional partners in a spirit of constructiveness and mutual respect. We must together turn the page on 2015 and set ourselves towards Burundi's future, in particular towards peaceful elections in 2020. We wish for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Burundi living in harmony with its neighbours and the other nations of the world.

In the area of human rights, Burundi continues its efforts to promote and protect human rights from both legislative and institutional perspectives. Here and now, we reaffirm our full cooperation with the international community in protecting and promoting human rights in accordance with the ground rules established in the Charter of the United Nations.

With regard to the return of refugees, the voluntary repatriation movement that began in 2016 is continuing at a satisfactory pace with the arrival of several thousand citizens who had taken refuge in Tanzania in particular. To date more than 200,000 Burundians have already returned home on a voluntary basis. Burundi expects 72,000 returnees by the end of this year, mainly from Tanzania.

On the humanitarian front, Burundi hopes that any support from the international community will be primarily directed to the development efforts under way in the country. Humanitarian aid should be limited to people in emergency situations.

I cannot conclude my statement without reiterating our urgent request to remove Burundi from the Security Council agenda. There are no objective criteria that justify keeping Burundi on the Council's agenda, per the provisions of the Charter, which everyone is familiar with. We are not asking for preferential treatment. Rather, we are asking that Burundi be treated fairly like the other Members, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The current situation in Burundi in no way poses a threat to international peace and security — the main mission of the Security Council. On the contrary, Burundi participates actively and admirably in peacekeeping missions around the world, with more than 6,000 men and women deployed, mainly in Somalia and the Central African Republic. Our participation in peace missions is to pay back the international community, which stood by Burundi in the dark moments of its history before the rebirth of democracy in 2005. The time and energy allocated to Burundi should be directed to other areas of conflict and tension, which are increasingly numerous. I ask the Council to listen to us and consider our appeal. Otherwise, history will remember that Burundi was kept on its agenda above and beyond the criteria established by the United Nations Charter, and that risks creating a dangerous precedent.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8269

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8269th meeting
Tuesday, 29 May 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018) (S/2018/484)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018) (S/2018/484)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/484, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018).

I give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: I am going to start today with eastern Ghouta, about which the Security Council has had many discussions and we have provided many briefings over the past five months, not least in respect of resolution 2401 (2018). After it regained control of the area, the Government of Syria asked the United Nations to provide assistance to local people. I released $16 million for that from the Syria Humanitarian Fund, for which I am responsible. The United Nations asked for visas for additional staff to work on the problems of the area, some of which were granted. Over the past two months, local, national and international humanitarian organizations have worked in sites in neighbouring areas that are hosting people displaced from eastern Ghouta. We are providing food, water, shelter, medical services and protection.

The collaboration that underpinned that effort must now extend into eastern Ghouta itself, as people there begin to try to rebuild their lives. We are providing assistance through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, but the United Nations itself has received authorization to visit eastern Ghouta only once since mid-March. That was for a visit to Sagba and Kafr Batna on 14 May. During that visit we observed the resumption of some services, with electricity, education and health facilities starting up, for example, and a limited number of businesses and markets reopening, but it was clear that there are huge unmet needs and extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure.

The authorities report that more than 10,000 people have returned to eastern Ghouta from rural Damascus over the past two weeks. That, and the needs of almost 200,000 people believed to have remained throughout the violence, makes access to the area even more critical. The Government has already approved an inter-agency convoy to bring assistance to 70,000 people in Douma as part of the current bi-monthly plan, but that convoy has not gone, because facilitation letters have not been provided. Therefore, I reiterate our request to the Government of Syria to facilitate access to eastern Ghouta, so that needs can be assessed and assistance and protection scaled up.

The humanitarian situation in and around Afrin remains highly complex. The United Nations and others continue to provide assistance, including food, nutrition, shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene and protection services to people displaced from Afrin to Tell Rifaat and elsewhere. Inside Afrin, humanitarian assistance provided from across the border has been critical for many people. Findings from a recent needs assessment tell us that most health facilities in rural areas remain closed, many medical personnel have fled and many schools, markets and bakeries are not functioning. We are still concerned about reports that people are being prevented from leaving areas of displacement in Tell Rifaat, although we hear that some may have been able to return to Afrin in recent days.

Yarmouk camp and surrounding areas in southern Damascus saw fierce fighting in the past month, resulting in the loss of life and the displacement of an estimated 6,000 people — most of them Palestinian refugees. Last week, combatants and civilians began to be evacuated from Yarmouk. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that as few as 100 refugees may now remain in the camp. Humanitarian organizations have not been able to access Yarmouk, but UNRWA was allowed to carry out a rapid needs assessment in neighbouring Yalda yesterday. An inter-agency convoy

to the area is now a key priority. I ask the Government to issue facilitation letters for that convoy.

On Rukban, discussions continue on how to deliver aid safely. That long-running issue is still not resolved. Humanitarian agencies are working closely with the Syrian authorities, the United States, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to get agreement on a convoy.

In Raqqa, the United Nations and its partners continue to provide assistance, including monthly food rations, household items, water trucking, psychosocial support for children and primary health-care services. However, while 135,000 people are now reported to have returned to Raqqa city, safety remains a very serious concern owing to high levels of explosive hazards.

The situation in Idlib is alarming, with air strikes, clashes between armed groups, overcrowding and severely stretched basic services deepening the suffering of both displaced people who have fled to Idlib and host communities. More than 80,000 newly displaced people have arrived in Idlib since March. Keeping pace with the increase in needs in Idlib has involved redirecting resources from other activities.

Many of the recent new arrivals in Idlib have come from northern rural Homs. Some 35,000 people were evacuated from that area earlier this month, after a significant escalation. An inter-agency convoy — the first in more than two months — is due to go to northern rural Homs tomorrow with assistance for nearly 93,000 people, following the receipt of facilitation letters on Sunday

During last week's open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (see S/PV.8264), the Secretary-General spoke about medical facilities being routinely attacked and about medical personnel being targeted or prevented from carrying out their duties around the world. Violence against health-care and health personnel remains a grim hallmark of the conflict in Syria. Ninety-two attacks have been documented over the first four months of this year. Those involved 89 deaths and 135 injuries. We are investigating a number of cases of medical facilities being attacked shortly after having been deconflicted. I want to emphasize how concerned I am about that. It is an issue on which I may have to come back to the Council.

I want to say finally a few words about the humanitarian response and the number of people we are helping despite all these problems.

In Syria we are running one of the world's largest humanitarian operations, and it continues to save lives every day. A nationwide immunization awareness campaign took place from 22 to 30 April. Initial results indicate that nearly 325,000 children were vaccinated against measles and 1.3 million children under five years old were vaccinated against polio. United Nations convoys approved by the Government of Syria in those parts of the country under Government control provided food assistance for more than 2 million people last month. Cross-border deliveries, mandated under resolution 2393 (2017), provided food for nearly 850,000 people. We are, incidentally, due to present to the Council the review commissioned in that resolution next month.

There are still more than 2 million people in hard-to-reach areas. Those 2 million people, in places like northern rural Homs, Douma and southern Damascus, are some of the most desperate in the country. Just six inter-agency convoys have reached those areas so far this year, helping 169,000 people. That is less than 20 per cent of the people we would like to be reaching. I again ask for the support of Council members for our efforts to ensure safe, unimpeded and sustained access, so we can help people like those in hard-to-reach areas who are in the greatest need.

The President: I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

There are no names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.